

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: P-12 Water Source Switch Project

Project No.: 2010-072-00

Project Manager: Eric Leitzinger, EWM-4

Location: Custer County, ID

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.20 Protection of Cultural Resources, Fish and Wildlife Habitat

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to fund the Custer Soil and Water Conservation District to drill two wells in Custer County, one mile southwest of May, Idaho. These wells would access groundwater for irrigation that would replace some of what is now being supplied by the Pahsimeroi River from the P-12 irrigation diversion.

This source switch would be accompanied by a water rights conversion of approximately 2.1 cubic feet per second (cfs) from surface water to groundwater for one of the water users of the P-12 irrigation diversion, which would allow that 2.1 cfs of surface water to remain in the Pahsimeroi River for salmonid habitat needs. The irrigation diversion would not be removed, but would continue to supply water to other water right holders.

This action would require drilling two wells near existing sprinkler irrigation systems and connecting those wells to existing electrical services and pipelines that supply those irrigation systems.

Funding this project would benefit Snake River spring/summer Chinook salmon, Snake River Basin steelhead, and bull trout and thus support commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion and would support conservation of Endangered Species Act-listed species considered in the 2020 Endangered Species Act consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on the operation and maintenance of the Columbia River System. This action also supports ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System on fish and wildlife in the mainstem Columbia River and its tributaries pursuant to the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act of 1980 (Northwest Power Act) (16 U.S.C. (USC) 839 et seq.).

Findings: In accordance with Section 1021.410(b) of the Department of Energy's (DOE) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Regulations (57 FR 15144, Apr. 24, 1992, as amended at 61 FR 36221-36243, Jul. 9, 1996; 61 FR 64608, Dec. 6, 1996, 76 FR 63764, Nov. 14, 2011), BPA has determined that the proposed action:

- 1) fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D (see attached Environmental Checklist);
- 2) does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; and
- 3) has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion.

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

/s/ Robert W. Shull

Robert W. Shull

Contract Environmental Protection Specialist

CorSource Technology Group

Reviewed by:

/s/ Carolyn Sharp

Carolyn Sharp

Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

02/01/2024

Date

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Checklist

This checklist documents environmental considerations for the proposed project and explains why the project would not have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources and would meet other integral elements of the applied categorical exclusion.

Proposed Action: P-12 Water Source Switch Project

Project Site Description

The project is located in the Pahsimeroi River valley on irrigated farmlands. Well sites would be located on ground that has been previously disturbed (vegetatively denuded and compacted) by motor vehicle and farm equipment use (Figure 1). No native vegetation or native, undisturbed, soils are present at either of the well locations. The vegetation is almost exclusively pasture grasses such as Kentucky blue grass (*Poa pratensis*) and redtop (*Agrostis gigantea*). A homesite and farmstead is located about 850 feet from one of the proposed well sites.

Figure 1 Typical Condition of Proposed Drilling Sites



Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A survey was conducted, and an inventory report was completed documenting that no cultural resources were identified within the area potentially affected by the project. Consultation with Tribes and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was initiated on November 17, 2023, with a determination that there would be no historic properties affected by this action. No responses were received from the Tribes and SHPO replied on December 1, 2023, concurring with this determination.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The soils that would be impacted have been vegetatively denuded and compacted by years of motor vehicle and agricultural equipment use; thus, the proposed action would not further compact soils or eliminate vegetation. Nonetheless, Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be applied to minimize soil loss to water and wind erosion. Topsoil would be salvaged and placed over graded surfaces after construction to maintain or improve soil productivity in the soils surrounding the well sites.

3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The sites that would be impacted have been effectively vegetatively denuded by past years of motor vehicle and agricultural equipment use; thus, there is no native vegetation or native plant communities present that would be disturbed by the proposed action. Grass seeding and hydro-mulching would be applied following project activities. No plant species listed under the Endangered Species Act or special-status species listed by the State of Idaho are present.

4. Wildlife (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wildlife species listed under the Endangered Species Act or special-status species listed by the State of Idaho are present, and very little wildlife habitat would be impacted. That which would be impacted is a simple pasture grassland habitat type, which is readily restored by seeding and planting.

5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No water bodies, wetlands, or aquatic habitat would be impacted by this action, though instream habitats and Endangered Species Act-listed Snake River spring/summer Chinook salmon, Snake River Basin steelhead, and bull trout in the Pahsimeroi River would benefit from the additional 2.1 cfs of surface flows that would be retained in the river by this source switch.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No water bodies, wetlands, or aquatic habitat would be impacted by this action.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Approximately 2.1 cfs of groundwater would be withdrawn from the local aquifer by this action. This amount of withdrawal is not anticipated to be of significance to the aquifer affected.

The operation of construction equipment activities may have a short-term potential to impact ground-water quality slightly from possible fuel or other fluid drips or spills, but BMPs and conservation measures from Bonneville's ESA consultation would be applied that would prevent or minimize this potential (e.g., equipment cleaning, staging locations, fuel storage requirements, etc.).

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no land use changes, and no specially-designated areas are present. No project action would change the land's capability to continue to be used for the agricultural purposes it previously was.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The new wells would be an additional feature on the landscape, but would be consistent with the visual characteristics of the pipelines and irrigation equipment currently present. There would be no long-term change to visual quality or visual character of the area. There would be short-term scenery impacts from the presence of drilling and grass cover removal (until revegetation measures succeed in green-up).

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Driving of trucks and operation of drilling equipment would produce emissions, but the amount would be minimal and short-term, and consistent with that produced by local agricultural activities.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Noise sources would be from trucks and operation of drilling equipment. Noise would be consistent with that produced by local agricultural activities and would be short-term. These impacts would occur during daylight hours, so as not to disturb the landowner's residence which is about 850 feet from the nearest well site.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No long-term public safety hazards would be created with this project. Routine, short-term, safety hazards would be expected from the incremental addition of truck and drilling equipment on local roads, and the operation of drilling equipment.

Evaluation of Other Integral Elements

The proposed project would also meet conditions that are integral elements of the categorical exclusion. The project would not:

Threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders.

Explanation: N/A

Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation: N/A

Disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA excluded petroleum and natural gas products that preexist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases.

Explanation: N/A

Involve genetically engineered organisms, synthetic biology, governmentally designated noxious weeds, or invasive species, unless the proposed activity would be contained or confined in a manner designed and operated to prevent unauthorized release into the environment and conducted in accordance with applicable requirements, such as those of the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Institutes of Health.

Explanation: N/A

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: The landowner associated with this project has already been coordinating with the Custer Soil and Water Conservation District on its purpose, actions, and implementation schedule. Activities would proceed following notification of, and in cooperation with, the affected landowner.

Based on the foregoing, this proposed project does not have the potential to cause significant impacts to any environmentally sensitive resource.

Signed: /s/ Robert W. Shull

Robert W. Shull
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CorSource Technology Group

02/01/2024

Date