

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Sally Ann Creek Fish Passage Project

Project No.: 1996-077-02

Project Manager: Ryan Ruggiero, EWM-4

Location: Idaho County, Idaho

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 Nez Perce Tribe to replace three culverts in Sally Ann Creek Road, a county road in Idaho County, Idaho. The culverts pass flows from Sally Ann Creek, a tributary of the Lower South Fork Clearwater River, approximately two miles downstream (north) of Harpster, Idaho. The existing culverts are barriers to passage of Endangered Species Act-listed Snake River steelhead and would be replaced with open-bottom, steel, structural-plate, arch culverts, with natural-functioning stream channel features within, and downstream of, each arch. The culverts are named as Sally Ann Creek Road AOP Crossing #1, Sally Ann Creek Road AOP Crossing #2, and Wall Creek Road AOP Culvert¹. Culvert locations are as follows:

Table 1 Culvert locations.

Culvert	Lat/Long	Township/Range/Section	Distance upstream of confluence with Lower SF Clearwater River
Crossing #1	46.012036/ -115.945378	SE¼ SW¼ Section 22 and E½ NW¼ Section 23 of Township 31N Range 4E	1.0
Crossing #2	46.014565/ -115.93501	SE¼ NE¼ Section 22 of Township 31N Range 4E.	1.6
Wall Creek Road AOP	46.018710/ -115.912267	NE¼ NE¼ Section 23 of Township 31N Range 4E	2.75

All three culverts are of the same design, though they differ in size. Crossings #1 and #2 are identical in width and height, both having a span of 19 feet and a height over the final stream elevation of 6 feet 4 inches. The Wall Creek Road culvert would span 23 feet with a height over the stream surface of 9 feet 10 inches. All three culverts differ in length (see Table 2, below).

Sally Ann Creek would be diverted around each construction site to reduce potential impacts to fish. At the Wall Creek Road culvert, Sill Creek would also be diverted since Sally Ann Creek and Sill Creek come together immediately above the culvert. Rerouting the flows would require the

¹ All three culverts span Sally Ann Creek, but are named after the roads in which they are located.

installation of cofferdams to redirect flow and a diversion pump to capture leakage of those coffer dams during construction. Fish would be captured and relocated from the construction site prior to the creek being dewatered to allow for construction. The culverts would be constructed using a metal-tracked excavator (CAT 320 or similar) operating with support equipment (loader or skid steer), dewatering pumps, and human labor. After construction, the creeks would be redirected back into their former channels immediately above the culverts and allowed to flow through the simulated stream channels under the new culverts and through a reconstructed stretch of channel below each new culvert.

The lengths and features of these reconstructed channels are as follows:

Table 2 *Constructed channel features.*

Culvert	Length of constructed channel below culvert outlet	Length of constructed channel inside culvert (new culvert length)	Constructed channel features inside culvert
Crossing #1	34 feet	132 feet	Scattered channel rock (about 14 rocks)
Crossing #2	100 feet	104 feet	Scattered channel rock (about 10 rocks)
Wall Creek Road AOP	41 feet	90 feet	8-9 rock cross vanes with scattered large channel rock between (15-18 rocks)

Following construction, all disturbed surfaces would be replanted with native seed and live plants suitable to riparian sites. Inspection and maintenance of the project sites would occur annually, and could include minor on-site adjustments to streambanks or the constructed channels within and below the culverts as needed to maintain project success. Additional vegetation would be planted if original plantings did not thrive as intended.

This Proposed Action fulfills commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Columbia River System Biological Opinion and would support ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the FCRPS 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

2/6/2024

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: Sally Ann Creek Fish Passage Project

Project Site Description

The project area reach of Sally Ann Creek is located within a canyon bottom with Douglas-fir and ponderosa pine forest on the north-facing slopes and grass shrub lands on the south-facing slopes. Riparian vegetation (forest and shrub) is confined to the stream corridor and inset floodplain.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA consulted with the Nez Perce Tribe and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on September 19, 2023, on the effects of the project based on intensive surveys of all three sites by the Nez Perce Tribe Cultural Resource Program. Previous archaeological surveys identified the presence of a Nez Perce campsite within the APE. During the survey, the site was determined to be located on the terrace above one of the project areas to be directly impacted, and no cultural material was present in the impact area. The survey found no additional archaeological resources or historic properties located within the APE, and BPA determined that no historic properties would be affected by this project. SHPO requested additional information on the age of the culverts to be replaced. These were ultimately determined to be modern, and no concerns were raised by SHPO. No formal reply was received from either SHPO or the Nez Perce Tribe within the legally mandated 30-day period from September 19, 2023, but SHPO replied in a November 16, 2023, email raising no concerns about the culvert replacements.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minor, temporary, impacts to soil from increased erosion potential during construction activities. Sediment control BMPs would be installed prior to project implementation to minimize potential for in-stream turbidity or excessive runoff during construction. Work areas would be isolated by rerouting water around the work area to minimize erosion and turbidity.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status plants, including Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed species, are known to be present. There would be temporary impacts to existing vegetation from heavy equipment excavation for culvert replacements and the 30 to 100 feet of stream channel reconstruction below the new culverts. Post-construction plantings and long-term monitoring would re-establish native upland and riparian plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status wildlife species or habitats are within the project sites. No habitats would be modified to any degree that might permanently displace resident wildlife, though some may be temporarily displaced by disturbance from construction activities. Human presence and activity associated with construction would temporarily disturb and displace nearby wildlife, but long-term displacement resulting in competition for nearby habitats is unlikely.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed Snake River steelhead are present in the project area. The project is covered under the HIP Biological Opinion under Section 7 of the ESA. The project sponsor would adhere to all applicable site-specific conservation measures identified in the HIP consultation and approval, including turbidity monitoring requirements and in-water work timing. No state-listed special-status species occupy the project areas.

Culvert replacements would occur at low flows and would require diversion of the creek by pumping and piping the creek flow around the construction sites. Fish removal would be completed via electrofishing before beginning work within the stream channels. Electrofishing is stressful on fish and potentially harmful, but the number of fish affected would be few and from only a small area of the creeks.

Some aquatic invertebrates and amphibians may be displaced or killed by the culvert installations, but quick re-occupation of these small sites by the same or other members of the same classes of animals following construction is anticipated.

A Clean Water Act Nationwide Permit would be obtained to ensure the project meets national water quality standards.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No streamside wetlands are present in the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no groundwater withdrawal. There would be some miniscule potential for contamination of groundwater from fuel or fluid drips or spills from the equipment used for culvert replacement, but spills and drips with the volume necessary to contaminate groundwater is unlikely. Onsite spill kits would also minimize the potential for spills and drips to be of sufficient quantity to contaminate groundwater.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not change the capability of the land to be used as it was prior to project actions. There would be no land use changes, and no impact to specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No visually-prominent vegetative, landform, or structural change would be made. Culvert replacement would not change the overall visual character of the landscape along, or as seen from, local roads.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be some exhaust and greenhouse gas emissions from the motorized equipment used for culvert replacement, but these are short-term actions, and no long-term source of emissions or exhaust is created. Vehicles used to transport workers, supplies, and equipment to the site would be another potential source of exhaust and greenhouse gasses, but this also would be minimal and short term.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be some short-term noise impacts from the heavy equipment used for the culvert replacements, but this type of noise is consistent with that of common logging, ranching, or farming operations in the local area.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Vehicle and excavator operation, and working with hand and power tools, have their attendant risks to equipment operators, but there would be no condition created from this action that would introduce new human health or safety hazards or risk into the environment. No condition created by this action would increase the burden on the local health, safety, and emergency-response infrastructure.

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 Sally Ann Creek culvert replacements are on a county road and designed in cooperation with the County and adjacent landowners, who would be notified prior to construction activities.

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

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2/6/2024

Date