

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: CDA Indian Creek LWD and Culvert Replacement projects

Project No.: 1990-032-00 and 1990-044-00

Project Manager: Lee Watts

Location: Benewah 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:

The Proposed Action consists of funding the Coeur d'Alene (CDA) Tribe for culvert replacement and installation of large woody debris (LWD) placement in the Hangman and Benewah Creek watersheds in northern Idaho.

Action	Latitude	Longitude
Culvert replacement – Sanders Road	47.12934	-116.837236
Culvert Replacement – Bull Creek	47.279584	-116.720894
LWD placement in Indian Creek	47.130667	-116.764393

Culvert Replacement

This action would replace culverts at risk of imminent failure and that currently block fish passage. The existing culverts (less than 50 years old) are round and 36 inches in diameter, and would be replaced with a squash culvert capable of providing fish passage at low flows. Large rocks would be individually placed in the stream (below the ordinary high water mark) immediately upstream and downstream of the culvert for fish habitat.

All work would be accomplished from the graveled surface of the roads to protect riparian wetlands up and downstream of the sites. Excavation would be limited to the existing fill of the road prisms. Staging of equipment and supplies would be along the shoulders, turnouts, and side roads within the prism of each road.

Replacement of the Sanders Road culvert would be accomplished in one day to meet county road-use constraints.

Large Woody Debris Placement

To increase habitat complexity for redband trout, large woody debris would be hand-placed in sections of Indian Creek and East Fork Indian Creek to simulate natural woody debris loading, increase habitat complexity, improve channel stability and reduce bank erosion. Wood delivered by Stimson Lumber (the landowner), and downed wood on site would be used to build approximately ten structures.

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.

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Project Site Description

Project activities would take place in riparian and wetland habitats along Indian Creek, an unnamed tributary to Hangman Creek in the Hangman Creek watershed, and on a private drive across Bull Creek within the Benewah Creek watershed. These riparian and wetland project sites are in areas harvested for timber; or within an agricultural/grazing setting surrounded by a forested landscape within the larger ecotone between Northern Rocky Mountain conifer forests and Palouse Prairie. The Indian Creek site is characterized as a riparian zone within a harvested conifer forest site; and the culvert replacement sites are characterized as a willow-shrub dominated riparian woodland within an agriculture-dominated landscape.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

- The LWD structures would be placed by hand in Indian Creek in locations that were surveyed for cultural resources for large wood placements and stream side plantings in prior years (Coeur d'Alene THPO concurrence letters for the "Indian Creek Restoration Project (hnt'iych'mishkwe')", 2016). No cultural or historic resources were located in the surveys for, or during monitoring of, those past actions.
- The culvert replacements would have no potential to affect since all work would occur in existing road fill or below the ordinary high water mark (OHWM), and access and staging would either be on existing roads, side roads, or within turnouts that are also road fill.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

- No heavy equipment would be used in the large wood structure placements in Indian Creek. There would be no dredging, excavation, rock removal, or other bank disturbance.
- For the culvert replacements, all work would be conducted from existing road surfaces, and all excavation would be of existing road fill, with no native ground (soils) being compacted, displaced, or mixed beyond the immediate inlet or outlet of the culvert below OHWM.

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

Potential for Significance: No

- No Federal/state special-status plant species or habitats are within the project sites.
- Native plants would not be removed or destroyed, though some plants would be cut by hand to facilitate placement of wood, rocks, or gravel.

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

Potential for Significance: No

- 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 project operations.
- The machine operations and wood placement would occur at low flows after mid/late-July which would be after migratory birds have completed nesting and fledging.
- All human presence and activity associated with these actions 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

- No ESA-listed species are present in the streams that would be affected. The projects' long-term result would be to improve habitats for native redband trout.
- No aquatic habitats would be adversely modified by installation of the large wood structures.
- Culvert replacements would occur at low flows and would require diversion of the low flows by pumping and piping the stream's flow around the construction site. Fish removal would be completed via electro-shocking before work within the stream channel begins. Electro shocking is stressful on fish and potentially harmful, but the number of fish affected would be few and from only a small area of the streams.
- Culvert replacement would require no excavation of the stream bed beyond the immediate inlet or outlet of the culvert below OHWM.
- Some aquatic invertebrates and amphibians may be displaced or killed by the culvert installation actions at the inlet and outlet of the culverts, but quick re-occupation of these small sites by the same or other members of the same classes of animals following construction is anticipated.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

- No riparian wetlands would be impacted by excavations or flooding from either large wood placement or culvert replacements.
- Large wood structures would be located in riparian habitats, but would not be located in wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

- 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 ATVs used for large wood placement, and the equipment used for

culvert replacement. But spills and drips with the volume necessary to contaminate groundwater is unlikely.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

- No project action would 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

- No visually-prominent vegetative, landform, or structural change would be made.
- The large wood placement would result in natural-appearing structures located in natural habitat conditions.
- Culvert replacement would not change the visual character of the landscape along, or as seen from, Sanders Road.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

- There would be some exhaust and greenhouse gas emissions from the motorized equipment used for both wood placement and culvert replacements; 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 sites 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

- There would be some short-term noise impacts from the heavy equipment used for the culvert replacements; and, to a much lesser degree, from the vehicles and hand tools used for wood placement in Indian Creek, but this type of noise is not inconsistent with that of common logging, ranching, or farming operations throughout the Hangman Creek watersheds.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

- Vehicle and excavator operation, and working with hand and power tools have their attendant risk to users, but there would be no condition created from these actions that would introduce new human health or safety hazards or risk into the environment.
- No condition created by these actions would increase the burden on the local health, safety, and emergency-response infrastructure.
- The six mile-long Sanders Road would be entirely blocked for only one day during culvert replacement, which would prevent emergency vehicle travel along that road on that day, but a parallel access route is available along Highway 95, accessible 4.4 miles from the site to the southeast, and 4 miles from the site to the northwest. Replacement of the Bull Creek culvert would be on a private drive and therefore not impact public access.

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: NA

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

This wood placement project is on property owned by Stimson Lumber, and a landowner agreement between the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and Stimson Lumber was established for the restoration work along Indian Creek.

The Sanders Road culvert replacement is on a road managed by Benewah County, and this project is the result of a cooperative effort between the Coeur d'Alene Tribe and Benewah County, with both participating in the funding and replacement action. Adjacent property owners would be informed of the action and the effect on accessibility along Sanders Road on the day of replacement.

The Bull Creek culvert replacement is on a private drive and designed in cooperation with the private land owner, 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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Date: July 15, 2020