

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Yakima/Klickitat Fisheries Project - Indian Creek Section 16 Floodplain Restoration Project

Project No.: 1997-051-00

Project Manager: Michelle O'Malley

Location: Kittitas County, Washington

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 Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to provide funding for staff time and materials to support implementation of the Yakama/Klickitat Fisheries Project (YKFP) Indian Creek Section 16 floodplain restoration project (Project) located in the Yakima Basin watershed. BPA funds would contribute toward staff time and materials. Additional cost-share from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration grant would cover project construction costs. The Project would restore floodplain storage capacity and connectivity, increase riparian function, and reduce late season stream temperatures for steelhead and other cold water fish.

Construction activities would include the use of an excavator to grade the railroad berm that parallels Indian Creek, cutting about seven pilot channels from the railroad induced ditch to Indian Creek, and using offset soils to fill the railroad ditch with native materials. In areas where there is not enough native fill available, slash and woody material provided with BPA funding would be used to construct a series of partially compacted dams to encourage wetland cell development and provide floodplain roughness that dissipates flows during high water events. Sediment runoff protection measures would be installed at least five feet from the active channel to prevent sediment from entering Indian Creek until the majority of earth work activities are completed.

All ground-disturbing activities would occur during the designated in water work window of July 16th to September 15th (October 31st if Chinook salmon are not detected in the work reach) and would be within a portion of the Indian Creek corridor that has been previously disturbed by human activities. Site access would be from an existing WDNR administrative access road. Equipment staging and refueling would be located more than 150 feet from the stream channel and outside of the floodplain. After construction is complete, soils would be de-compacted and topped with slash to minimize erosion potential. Native seed and live stake plantings would be overseen by a plant ecologist. Live staking would be primarily focused within the pilot channels. A custom wetland/upland seed mix would be applied on disturbed floodplain surfaces to maximize survival and coverage.

Inspection and maintenance of the project site would occur annually, and could result in minor on-site adjustments to wood placements, the addition of woody materials to the site, or additional vegetation planting and management.

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/ Claire McClory

Claire McClory

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

July 22, 2020

Sarah T. Biegel

Date

NEPA Compliance Officer

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.

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Project Site Description

The Indian Creek Section 16 project site is located within the North Cascades, Chiwaukum Hills and Lowlands ecoregion. The Project would occur in the Teanaway Community Forest (TCF), which is a 50,000-acre piece of public land owned by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) and co-managed with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). The project site is located within a Low Density Trail Area, and Road and River Corridor identified in the TCF Recreation Plan. It is an area identified for non-motorized trails development, scenic driving, and river restoration that coincides with river access for fishing, swimming, and day use.

The project area is within a segment of Indian Creek that has been heavily degraded and hydrologically altered by railroad logging activities, livestock grazing, and other agricultural uses that resulted in substantial alterations to hydrological processes in the Indian Creek Watershed. These historical uses have reduced floodplain function and roughness, and weakened the riparian corridor such that Indian Creek has become a straightened and incised channel with limited floodplain access. The project area is within a flat, open, disconnected floodplain dominated by non-native weeds and grasses. Grand fir and Douglas-fir dominated forest surrounds the property.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA made a determination of no adverse effect to historic properties on June 10, 2020 (WA 2020 025). The Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) concurred on June 10, 2020. No responses were received from remaining consulting parties, including: Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, WDNR, and WDFW.

Notes:

- Known sites would be avoided using the existing road prism for project access.
- In the event that archaeological or historic materials are discovered during project activities, work in the immediate vicinity must stop, the area secured, and the concerned tribe's cultural staff and cultural committee and DAHP notified.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary impacts to soil from increased erosion potential during construction and grading activities. Sediment control BMPs would be installed prior to project implementation

to minimize potential for excessive runoff during construction. Post construction seeding and mulching would further minimize erosion potential. Partially compacted dam installation along the filled ditch would result in long-term wetland development. Long term, soil retention would increase and erosion potential would decrease where slash is added to the floodplain, and in newly ponded areas.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status, including Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed, plant species are present. Temporary impacts to existing vegetation during grading activities. Post construction seeding and monitoring would re-establish native upland and riparian plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: Minor, temporary impacts to local wildlife from noise and vegetation removal expected. Listed species include historical Northern spotted owl (NSO) management circles within the project area that are monitored annually by WDFW staff with no recent detections. The project is covered under the Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) Biological Opinion under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Acts (ESA) with Project Notification Form (PNF) number 2020061.

Notes:

- Loud equipment use from chainsaws would occur outside of the NSO critical nesting period of March 1st to July 15th. No helicopter use proposed for this action.
- Project sponsors would adhere to all applicable site-specific conservation measures identified in the HIP consultation and approval, including construction timing and equipment use restrictions in potential NSO habitat.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No known state listed special-status species present. ESA-listed fish species include bull trout, spring Chinook, coho, and steelhead. The project area is also within designated Critical Habitat for ESA-listed Middle Columbia River steelhead. The project is covered under the HIP Biological Opinion under Section 7 of ESA with PNF number 2020061. Effects to Indian Creek would be minimal and limited to temporary, low level turbidity once sediment protection measures are removed and proposed pilot channels are connected to Indian Creek. Railroad grading and ditch filling activities would include contouring to match existing floodplain elevations. YKFP received WDFW Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) permit No.019-3-52+01.

Notes:

- 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.
- The project sponsor would adhere to all applicable site-specific conservation measures identified in the HPA permit for the project.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: About 500 cubic yards of railroad berm materials and slash would be used to fill the parallel ditch, encouraging wetland development and increasing floodplain access. Equipment access and construction activities would take place during the dry season, and avoidance and minimization measures identified in the project Sponsor's Clean Water Act (CWA) Nationwide Permit 27 (NWS-NWS-2020-499) would further reduce potential impacts to existing wetlands within the project area. The project would result in long-term increases in wetland cell development.

Notes:

- The Project Sponsor would adhere to all wetland avoidance and minimization efforts identified in the CWA permit issued for this project.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor impacts to groundwater during construction excavation within the floodplain. Long-term increase in floodplain access and wetland cell development would benefit groundwater recharge and function long-term.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary impact to recreation users due to access limitations during construction in the immediate project area. The project would align with the WDNR TCF Low Density Trail Area, and Road and River Corridor recreation designations by enhancing river process and function while maintaining long-term access to fishing and dispersed recreation and hiking within the TCF.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor change to visual quality from berm removal and the addition of wood and slash on the floodplain. The project area is not within a visually sensitive area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in vehicle emissions and dust during construction. No long-term impacts to air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in noise during daytime construction activities due to vehicles and equipment use. No long-term impacts to air quality.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impact expected.

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 Yakama Nation has been working with WDNR to obtain a land use license for conducting the proposed work on WDNR property.

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

Signed: /s/ Claire McClory 07/22/2020
Claire McClory, ECF-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist