

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Pine Creek Conservation Area 2021 O&M

Project No.: 1998-022-00

Project Manager: Corrie Veenstra. EWL – 4

Location: Wheeler County, Oregon

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) is proposing to fund the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (CTWSRO) to implement infrastructure operation and maintenance (O&M) on the Pine Creek Conservation Area (PCCA), to include: installing new gates, informational kiosks, and a vault restroom. The new installations would improve public recreation facilities and facility management operations. These actions would support Bonneville's commitments to the CTWSRO under the 2020 Columbia River Fish Accord Extension agreement, while also supporting 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.).

Gate post and kiosks would be installed at the Huntly Homestead, Cove Creek, and Rattlesnake camp grounds. Gates would establish boundaries near camp entrances in areas subject to frequent vehicles trespassing, and kiosks would provide public recreation information. Gate and kiosk posts installation would consist of boring 2 to 3 post holes approximately 12 inches wide and 4 feet deep using an auger, and stabilized with cement. The sites would be accessed by established roads and by foot.

A self-contained double vault waterless restroom would be installed at Rattlesnake camp ground. The restroom would require excavation of approximately 20- by 20-foot wide and 8-foot deep area. Underground vaults would be secured and backfilled with excavated rocks and soil, the remaining materials would be utilized around the project site. The vaults would be sealed with a cement slab and a prefabricated building would be fixed above the slab. A backhoe, mechanical tools and hand tools would be used for excavation and construction. The project area would be accessed by established roads and by foot. Equipment and materials would be staged within the campsite area, which is hardened from frequent use.

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/ Lindsey Arotin

Lindsey Arotin
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange November 23, 2021

Katey C. Grange 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 PCCA is a 34,000 acre designated fish, wildlife, and watershed mitigation site in the John Day basin near Fossil, in Wheeler County, OR. The property is a fee-owned tribal land owned and managed by the CTWSRO. The project areas, Huntley Homestead, Cove Creek, and the Rattlesnake Campground are all located within the PCCA and used for recreation. The region is characterized by canyons and ridges with elevations ranging from 1,360 to 2,827 feet. Drainage areas produce riparian and aquatic habitats and vegetation consists of grasses, sagebrush, and juniper.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA determined that the implementation of the proposed undertaking would result in no historic properties affected on October 13, 2021 (OR 2021 063). CTWSRO concurred with the determination on November 8, 2021. Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with the determination of project effect as long as isolate AAR 2466-1i is avoided by the proposed activities.

Notes:

- An Inadvertent Discovery Plan and Monitoring Plan is required to be provided to the on-site crew. In the event any archaeological materials are encountered during project activities, work would be stopped immediately and a BPA Archaeologist and Historian would be notified, as well as all consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The bathroom, gate and kiosk installations would permanently disturb the soils on all project sites. Post holes for the gates and kiosks installation would be 4 ft. maximum. Excavation for the bathroom would be no greater than 8 ft. deep, excavated soils would be backfilled and used around the construction area. The site is denuded and compacted by heavy recreation use, all projects would have very little impact to current conditions.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Federal/state special-status species in the project area or on the PCCA property. The site is denuded and compacted by heavy recreational use, so there are very few plants to disrupt.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no known Federal/state special-status species in the proposed project area. The camp grounds routinely endure high levels of recreational activity, which deters wildlife in the proposed work areas so installation of restroom, gates and kiosks would have little to no impact. Equipment use would be temporary and only used during daylight work hours.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Federal/state special-status species' habitats in the proposed project area. The proposed activities would not involve any in-water work or handling of fish. The installation of this restroom would be along an improved road adjacent to a paved highway road in a denuded upland site in what would otherwise be high desert scrub habitats. The proposed restroom installation would have no effect on waterbodies, floodplains, or fish

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present in the proposed action areas or within PCCA.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no potential to impact groundwater and no use of groundwater is proposed. The proposed restroom installation would require excavation no deeper than 8 ft., and the waste store vaults are sealed leak-proof containers and would be pumped on a regular basis. Post holes for the gates and kiosks installations would be 4 ft. maximum, and would not impact groundwater.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Newly installed gates would restrict access when visitation is not permitted but there would be no changes to land use and no impact to specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed restoration work would have a temporary and long term impact. Short-term changes to the landscape would occur during construction, to include work zone conditions, vehicles and equipment. Long-term low impact changes would occur as a result of the permanent access gates, kiosks, and the restroom building.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A temporary increase in emissions and dust from heavy equipment and vehicles accessing the work sites would be very minor and short term during construction, but would resume to normal conditions immediately once the project is completed.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed gate, kiosk and bathroom installations would result in a temporary increase in ambient noise. Any noise emitted from construction equipment would be short term and temporary during daylight hours and would cease following project completion.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed gate, kiosks, and bathroom installation is not considered hazardous nor does it result in any health or safety risks to the general public. The proposed restroom installation would be pumped and disposed of at an appropriate off site treatment facility on a regular basis. There would be no soil contamination or hazardous conditions and no CERCLA sites disturbed as a result of the proposed project.

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: Advisory Committee meetings are held annually to inform and involve landowners of ongoing activities and potential future projects. Additionally, adjacent landowners are contacted directly if a project has potential to affect areas near their boundary lines and an open-line of communication has been established between the PCCA Project Leader and surrounding landowners.

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

Signed: /s/ Lindsey Arotin

Lindsey Arotin, ECF – 4
Environmental Protection Specialist

November 23, 2021

Date