

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Lick Creek Post Assisted Log Structures

**Project No.:** 1994-018-05

**Project Manager:** 90556

**Location:** Asotin County, Washington

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B 1.20 Protection of cultural resources, fish and wildlife habitat

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund Asotin County Conservation District (ACCD) to install Post Assisted Log Structures (PALS) on the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area in Asotin County, Washington. Work would be done to support WDFW's response to the Lick Creek wildfire that occurred in 2021.

The 2021 wildfire event damaged sections of riparian vegetation and left large areas of upland slopes with exposed soils above Lick Creek. In-stream habitat structures would be installed in Lick Creek to reduce sediment inputs, decrease woody debris transport time, increase complexity, and enhance fish habitat. Future actions may occur in the area that further address the wildfire damage.

The project would consist of 25 to 35 PALS installed in Lick Creek. PALS installation would consist of untreated wooden posts inserted into the stream bed using a hand-held pneumatic post-pounder. Each structure would consist of approximately 4 to 25 posts depending on the width of the stream at the installation locations. Several pieces of woody debris would be woven in between the posts by hand. Posts would penetrate roughly 2 to 3 feet into the stream bed at each structure. Chainsaws, handsaws, sledgehammers, shovels, and drills may also be used in the installation of the PALS. A 4-wheeler would be used to access the site via pre-existing roads and two-tracks and to stage materials at designated staging areas or along existing roadways near the creek.

Funding the proposed activities would support conservation on ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System 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.).

**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/ Catherine Clark

Catherine Clark  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange  
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.

**Proposed Action:** Lick Creek Post Assisted Log Structures

## **Project Site Description**

The proposed project would take place on lands managed by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) in the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area Unit. Prior to state purchase, the land was primarily used for livestock grazing and livestock production. WDFW manages the land for wildlife habitat and recreation including hunting, camping, and hiking. A large wildfire event occurred in the Lick Creek drainage in 2021 (Lick Creek Fire) which left large areas of exposed soil and damaged riparian vegetation.

## **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 project would result in no historic properties affected (WA 2022 094). BPA notified WDFW, Nez Perce Tribe (NPT), the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), and Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) on August 25<sup>th</sup> 2022. Washington DAHP concurred with BPA's determination on August 26<sup>th</sup> 2022. The NPT concurred with BPA's determination on August 29<sup>th</sup> 2022. No additional responses from consulting parties were received within 30 days.

Notes:

- In the event that archeological or historic materials are discovered during project activities, work in the immediate vicinity must stop, the area be secured, and the concerned tribe's cultural staff and cultural committee and DAHP notified.

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The installation of the PALS would temporarily disturb soils on the project site. Best Management Practices (BMP) have been developed to avoid or minimize temporary fine sediment impacts during construction. In the long term PALS installation would catch sediment entering the creek and keep sediment from traveling downstream.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed or special-status plant species are known to exist on the site. Areas that are disturbed would be revegetated with native plant species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed wildlife species are present in the project area. WDFW special-status wildlife species or habitat present in the wildlife area would not be negatively impacted in the long term by the installation of the proposed structures. Wildlife may be temporarily disturbed and displaced by construction noise during implementation, but wildlife is anticipated to access the abundant adjacent habitat and to return quickly after project completion.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is covered under the Habitat Improvement Project (HIP) Biological Opinion (BiOp) under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Listed fish species present in the project area include Snake River Basin steelhead and their critical habitat. The project plans were reviewed by BPA engineering technical services and a series of conservation measures in accordance with the HIP consultation would be implemented to ensure that the project would benefit ESA-listed fish species and adhere to the HIP consultation.

Project work would occur during the extended in-water work window approved by WDFW local fish biologist; therefore, no impact to non-ESA-listed fish species would occur. In the long term, this project was designed to increase fish habitat complexity.

#### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands located in the project area.

#### **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground-disturbing activities are not likely to intersect with groundwater and would have no impact on aquifers. Construction BMPs would be implemented to prevent contamination of groundwater from equipment leaks and spills.

#### **8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is located on WDFW-managed property. Public access would remain the same during and after project implementation; therefore, no changes to land use would occur.

#### **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor changes to visual quality would occur. The new PALS would be visually consistent with adjacent vegetation and topography of the proposed structures would not be located in a visually sensitive area.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in emissions and dust from vehicles accessing the site during construction activities.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in ambient noise during construction. 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 activities are not considered hazardous nor would result in any health and safety risks to the general public.

### 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: Asotin County Watershed District staff have been in coordination with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife staff for all work.

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

Signed: /s/ Catherine Clark September 23, 2022  
Catherine Clark Date  
Environmental Protection Specialist