

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Windmill Property Acquisition

Project No.: 2002-003-00, BPA-013194

Project Manager: Elizabeth Santana – EWM-4

Location: Lake County, Montana

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.25 Real property transfers for cultural resources protection, habitat preservation, and wildlife management

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA is proposing to fund the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe (CSKT) to purchase the Windmill property, an about 14-acre parcel of land located 8.5 miles northeast of Arlee in Lake County, Montana. BPA would hold a conservation easement to permanently protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitat. BPA would also provide stewardship funds toward land management and maintenance of the property to CSKT.

Funding the purchase of the property would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System, while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for the effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System on fish and wildlife in the mainstem of the Columbia River and its tributaries pursuant to the Pacific Northwest Electric Power and Planning and Conservation Act of 1980 (the Northwest Power Act) (16 U.S.C. (USC) 839 et seq.).

The property consists of riparian forest along the banks of the Jocko River and additional upland grassland. CSKT would develop a land management plan to guide the protection and enhancement of habitat and other resources on the property. The land management plan would be drafted within 18 months of closing. The management plan would be reviewed by BPA for consistency with the conservation easement and the purpose of the acquisition. If BPA proposes to fund any additional activities on the property, further environmental review may be conducted.

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/ Thomas DeLorenzo

Thomas DeLorenzo

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: Windmill Property Acquisition

Project Site Description

The Windmill property is an about 14-acre property located in Ravalli, Montana roughly 8.5 miles northeast of the town of Arlee. The property is located near the intersection of US Highway 93 and Montana Highway 200 and is bordered by the Jocko River along the western edge of the property. CSKT owns the surrounding properties to the south and west, while the adjacent parcel to the north is held by a private landowner. US Highway 93 and a railroad right-of-way border the property to the east. The habitat of the area is typical of the local ecoregion, with riparian forest along the banks of the river and shrub-steppe grassland dominated by bunchgrasses in upland areas. The Jocko River provides important habitat for local wildlife and resident fish species, including westslope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi*) and ESA-listed bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*).

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no effect due to the land acquisition, which includes transfer of title and the creation of a conservation easement. To the extent that future activities on the property may have an effect, it is expected that CSKT would comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

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: Notice would be mailed to nearby landowners prior to closing. BPA would also run public notice in local area newspapers for at least two weeks prior to closing.

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

Signed: /s/ Thomas DeLorenzo October 3, 2023
Thomas DeLorenzo – ECF-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist