

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Nez Perce SWCD planting, vegetation maintenance, water developments and stream temperature monitoring in the Lapwai Creek watershed

Project No.: 2002-070-00

Project Manager: Ryan Ruggiero – EWM-4

Location: Lewis and Nez Perce counties, Idaho

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.20 Protection of cultural resources, fish and wildlife habitat; B3.1 Site characteristics and environmental monitoring.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Nez Perce Soil and Water Conservation District (NPSWCD) to maintain vegetation at previously-completed habitat restoration project sites, install a series of eight water developments and fencing implemented over the course of several years, and collect stream temperatures at established monitoring sites throughout the Lapwai Creek watershed. Planting and maintaining healthy riparian vegetation are essential to protect initial project investments and enhance stream restoration. Water developments and fencing would reduce livestock impacts on riparian areas as livestock are currently watering directly from the stream resulting in riparian vegetation destruction, streambank erosion, and nutrient loading. Stream temperature monitoring would provide information to evaluate and assess water conditions and guide adaptive management decisions. These activities would contribute to efforts to enhance steelhead (*Onchorhynchus mykiss*) natural production within the Lapwai Creek watershed by addressing primary limiting factors to steelhead recovery. These actions would also support the conservation of Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) in Lapwai Creek.

Funding the proposed actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations 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.).

Planting

Planting activities would occur in previously-restored sites and would include pre-planting site preparation including scalping of grass, and planting of native trees, shrubs, grass, and wetland plants. Native vegetation would be planted per USDA Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) protocols following a pattern and spacing that mimics the natural vegetation in the vicinity. Grass, forbs, shrubs, and trees would be installed within the riparian zone. Planting would be done in the dormant season by hand with a shovel, hoe dad, water-jet

stinger, or small backhoe bucket. Generally, work would be completed in June and July at elevations below 1,400 feet and in July and August at locations with elevations above 1,400 feet. Animal damage prevention devices such as tree tubes/protectors or cages would be installed as needed. Some cages may require fence posts, driven about 12 inches into the soil, to keep them in place.

Vegetation Maintenance

The NPSWCD would maintain vegetation at previously-completed restoration sites for several years to ensure optimal growth and survival of native species. Inter-planting or re-seeding would be done if mortality or lack of vigor requires it. Non-native plants would be removed by mechanical and/or chemical methods such as mowing, addition of mats, and spot spraying of herbicide applications. Animal damage prevention devices such as tree tubes/protectors or cages would be adjusted and replaced, as needed. In addition, general maintenance such as irrigation, sun protectors, controlled burns, and other activities designed to enhance the health of target species and the ecosystem would be implemented as needed.

Water Developments

Spring water developments would be installed at an ongoing restoration site near Mission Creek (21-2240). Each water development system would include a cistern, pipeline (total of 3,500 cumulative linear feet of 1.5-inch-diameter pipe) and one water trough. A backhoe would be used to excavate an approximately 6-foot-wide by 6-foot-long by 2-foot-deep hole for cistern construction and an approximately 6-inch-wide and 2-foot-deep trench for the pipeline. The water development system would follow NRCS specifications. Fencing would be used to prevent cattle access to the stream. Five-wire fence would be installed along the stream using NRCS specifications which determine the wire spacing, post spacing, material type and tolerances, and bracing requirements. Fencing would be installed using hand tools, and the location would be accessed by foot or ATV.

Stream Temperature Monitoring

Stream temperature would be monitored at previously established sites in the Lapwai Creek watershed. A subset of these sites would be identified for data collection each year based on NPSWCD's Stream Temperature Monitoring Plan. Sites would be accessed by vehicle and by foot on existing roads and trails. All stream temperature data would be collected using continuous monitoring devices. Monitors would be deployed in March/April and collected in November. Deployment would include placement of the monitor in a waterproof container, anchoring the container to a post or tree, and submerging the container in identified stream location.

Project Locations

Project actions would take place on 74 private properties. The NPSWCD would obtain or renew agreements for owner permission to access these properties. The names of the properties, their locations, and actions that would take place are listed in Attachment A.

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.

Jacquelyn Schei
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist, Attachment A

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: Nez Perce SWCD planting, vegetation maintenance, water developments and stream temperature monitoring in the Lapwai Creek watershed

Project Site Description

The Lapwai Creek watershed lies entirely within the Nez Perce 1863 Reservation boundary. From its origin in Mason Butte (Lewis County), Lapwai Creek flows north through various crop- and pasturelands and northward into Nez Perce County and parallels the US 95 corridor for approximately 25 miles. Through the highway corridor, Lapwai Creek drains the highway as well as the adjacent hillslopes and shows a high degree of channel confinement. The regular occurrence of extreme high runoff events and low summer flows, high summer water temperatures, poor instream and riparian cover, and siltation of spawning gravels have become limiting factors in the watershed. Primary pollutant sources and habitat degradations are agricultural, livestock, and forestry and road practices. Restoration sites are on private properties scattered throughout the Lapwai Creek watershed in Nez Perce and Lewis counties, primarily in riparian areas. Stream temperature monitoring would take place throughout the watershed in Lapwai Creek and its tributaries. Access to monitoring locations would be on private properties.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: There are no heavy equipment operations (e.g., bulldozers, excavators) proposed, so there would be no major soil or ground disturbance with potential to affect cultural resources. All planting, vegetation maintenance, and water development project sites and actions were the subject of cultural resource surveys and consultation with Idaho State Historic Preservation Office and relevant tribes at the time of the original restoration implementation. For all sites, BPA made a determination of “no historic properties affected” or “no adverse effect to historic properties”.

Stream temperature monitoring activities would have no ground disturbance as temperature loggers would be dropped in streams and tied to an existing tree or post. Loggers and material used to tie them in place would be removed at the end of each field season, thus the proposed work would not have the potential to impact historic or cultural resources.

Notes:

- Impacts to the Craig Mountain Railway berm (located at site: Site 21-2240 P3 Mission Creek) would be limited to use as a road to transport equipment and materials.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Stream temperature monitoring would not involve any ground disturbance and would have no impact to the geology or soils.

Planting tools would be limited to shovels, mechanized hand tools, or a small backhoe bucket. No heavy equipment operations (e.g., bulldozers, excavators) would be used, so there would be no large-scale soil displacement, soil mixing, or other mechanical soil disturbance. Vegetation maintenance would consist of mechanical (hand pulling and weed eating) and chemical weed treatment. Water development and fencing installation would also use a backhoe and hand tools. Minor and temporary ground disturbances would occur as part of these actions and would have a minor impact on the geology and soils. Proposed treatment areas have been previously disturbed by work during implementation of original restoration activities and would result in the establishment of native vegetation and exclusion of livestock from riparian areas, which would have a long-term beneficial impact on soil resources. Project actions would be intended to improve habitat conditions.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The Spalding's catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*), which is ESA-listed Threatened, has the potential to be in the project area; however, there is no critical habitat in the project area. The project's potential impacts to Spalding's catchfly are covered under BPA's HIP BiOp. Relevant HIP conservation measures pertaining to project actions would be applied. Effects would, therefore, be minor and consistent with the not likely to adversely affect determination of the HIP BiOp.

There are no state special-status plant species documented in the project area. Minor and temporary vegetation disturbances associated with site access, ground disturbance, and weed treatment would occur as part of the proposed activities but would have short-term effects on vegetation. In the long term, there would be beneficial effects from restored or improved vegetative conditions.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Federally-listed or state special-status wildlife species or their habitats known to occur in the project area. Wildlife present during project activities may be temporarily disturbed by human presence and noise. Improved habitat conditions would result in long term positive impacts, including increased riparian plant density, diversity, and habitat structure and a reduction of livestock impacts on the riparian area and stream.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Federally-listed Snake River Basin steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) are present in the Lapwai Creek watershed. There are no state special-status species in the project area.

Potential impacts to Federally-listed species would be covered under BPA's HIP BiOp and conservation measures would be applied to minimize effects to listed species. The proposed planting, vegetation maintenance, and installation of water developments and fencing actions would take place near, but not in, any water bodies. No herbicide would be applied in-water and the proposed spot treatments of herbicides would have low potential to drift or enter waterways. There may be sediment runoff from the site into nearby streams, but the effects would be minor and temporary. Stream temperature monitoring would occur in water but would result in minimal impacts from placing and retrieving loggers from streams. No changes to the existing conditions of streams would occur. Project actions would help restore native riparian vegetation and reduce livestock impacts to the stream and riparian area for the benefit of aquatic species.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not change the hydrology within the project area, and any activities within or near wetlands would be limited to methods with little to no ground disturbance. No fill, excavation, or destruction of wetlands would occur. Effects on wetlands would be temporary and limited to native plantings, the removal of undesirable vegetation, and stream temperature monitoring to improve conditions for native wetland species. This would have the long-term effect of improving the quality of local wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or use of groundwater are proposed. Herbicide impacts to groundwater and aquifers would be minimized by application according to manufacturer's label. The proposed actions would have no long-term impact to groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The underlying land use would not change and no impact to specially-designated areas would occur as a result of this project.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would have little to no effect on visual quality and the project would be returning the area to a more natural vegetative condition.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minor, temporary effects to the air quality of the environment from herbicide application and dust and exhaust from vehicle use for site access and vegetation maintenance actions as a result of this project. Spot treatments of herbicides would have low potential to drift. Normal conditions would return upon project completion. Effects would therefore be minor.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would result in a temporary increase in ambient noise. Any noise emitted from 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 work is not considered hazardous, nor does it result in any health or safety risks to the general public. There would be no soil contamination or hazardous conditions. Spot treatments of herbicides would have low potential to drift. Normal conditions would return upon project completion. All personnel would use best management practices to protect worker health and safety. Effects would therefore be minor.

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 Nez Perce Soil and Water Conservation District has multi-year or annual agreements securing landowner permission to access and implement proposed actions at each site. Land ownership would be verified annually and new points of contact would be established for new owners. Access and landowner permission would be coordinated as needed (annually or in multiple year periods) based on the agreements in place with landowners.

Signed:

Jacquelyn Schei, ECF - 4
Environmental Protection Specialist

Attachment A. Project Locations

Name	County	Coordinates	Actions
LBPA-0411	Lewis	46.290696, -116.564571	Vegetation maintenance
11-124	Nez Perce	46.416781, -116.800123	Vegetation maintenance
38238-WELMN-0990	Lewis	46.317844, -116.544944	Vegetation maintenance
42391-WECDE-0986	Nez Perce	46.357700, -116.784626	Vegetation maintenance
11-142	Nez Perce	46.438649, -116.733452	Vegetation maintenance
21-2240 P3 Mission Crk/MLC Spring Dev	Lewis	46.184987, -116.663395	Plantings, vegetation maintenance, water developments, fencing
17-1918 Rock Creek Floodplain	Nez Perce	46.355713, -116.711572	Plantings, vegetation maintenance
12-1551	Nez Perce	46.438815, -116.73654	Vegetation maintenance
12-160	Nez Perce	46.437777, -116.755011	Vegetation maintenance
15-1584	Lewis	46.338624, -116.535347	Vegetation maintenance
16-1430	Lewis	46.306639, -116.71288	Vegetation maintenance
16-1823	Nez Perce	46.274524, -116.576202	Vegetation maintenance
17-1918	Nez Perce	46.356466, -116.714005	Vegetation maintenance
21-2240	Lewis	46.171988, -116.651775	Vegetation maintenance
22-2366	Nez Perce	46.16853, -116.771119	Vegetation maintenance
F-MC-02	Lewis	46.163367, -116.631625	Stream temperature monitoring
F-MC-01	Nez Perce	46.358025, -116.719802	Stream temperature monitoring
F-RO-01	Nez Perce	46.338379, -116.534894	Stream temperature monitoring
F-TB-02	Nez Perce	46.437578, -116.757275	Stream temperature monitoring
F-RC-01	Nez Perce	46.349172, -116.702912	Stream temperature monitoring
GG-01	Nez Perce	46.395193, -116.795159	Stream temperature monitoring
LBPA-0308S	Nez Perce	46.330062, -116.835066	Stream temperature monitoring
LBPA-0521DS	Nez Perce	46.177888, -116.619	Stream temperature monitoring
LBPA-0524	Nez Perce	46.365756, -116.746518	Stream temperature monitoring
LBPA-0641US	Lewis	46.161779, -116.630315	Stream temperature monitoring
LC-01	Nez Perce	46.300812, -116.590866	Stream temperature monitoring
LC-02	Nez Perce	46.372823, -116.702693	Stream temperature monitoring
LC-03	Nez Perce	46.237489, -116.619936	Stream temperature monitoring
LC-04	Nez Perce	46.448419, -116.817914	Stream temperature monitoring
LC-05	Nez Perce	46.374678, -116.792822	Stream temperature monitoring
LC-06	Nez Perce	46.366209, -116.794195	Stream temperature monitoring
LC-07	Nez Perce	46.372437, -116.710406	Stream temperature monitoring
LC-08	Nez Perce	46.373701, -116.684524	Stream temperature monitoring
LC-09	Nez Perce	46.371476, -116.725220	Stream temperature monitoring
LC-10	Lewis	46.267391, -116.570235	Stream temperature monitoring
LC-12	Nez Perce	46.274696, -116.576564	Stream temperature monitoring
LC-SZ	Nez Perce	46.373669, -116.664227	Stream temperature monitoring
MC-01	Lewis	46.316785, -116.711206	Stream temperature monitoring
MC-02	Nez Perce	46.357907, -116.719191	Stream temperature monitoring
MC-04	Lewis	46.190585, -116.649353	Stream temperature monitoring
MC-05	Nez Perce	46.357564, -116.718829	Stream temperature monitoring
MC-06	Nez Perce	46.367039, -116.735616	Stream temperature monitoring
MC-07	Nez Perce	46.301305, -116.710963	Stream temperature monitoring

Name	County	Coordinates	Actions
MC-08	Nez Perce	46.304819, -116.712724	Stream temperature monitoring
MC-09	Lewis	46.173472, -116.640027	Stream temperature monitoring
MC-10	Lewis	46.183687, -116.644528	Stream temperature monitoring
PO-01	Nez Perce	46.266533, -116.742719	Stream temperature monitoring
RC-01	Nez Perce	46.354831, -116.709212	Stream temperature monitoring
RC-02	Lewis	46.26762, -116.633237	Stream temperature monitoring
RC-03	Lewis	46.270537, -116.633478	Stream temperature monitoring
RO-01	Lewis	46.332152, -116.596519	Stream temperature monitoring
RO-02	Lewis	46.348798, -116.552118	Stream temperature monitoring
RO-03	Lewis	46.316716, -116.545911	Stream temperature monitoring
RO-04	Lewis	46.322415, -116.537535	Stream temperature monitoring
RO-05	Lewis	46.313906, -116.549792	Stream temperature monitoring
RO-06	Nez Perce	46.325679, -116.534353	Stream temperature monitoring
SC-01	Nez Perce	46.318095, -116.847133	Stream temperature monitoring
SC-02	Nez Perce	46.326174, -116.841405	Stream temperature monitoring
SC-03	Nez Perce	46.369556, -116.794925	Stream temperature monitoring
SC-04	Nez Perce	46.180982, -116.77041	Stream temperature monitoring
SC-05	Nez Perce	46.183047, -116.773917	Stream temperature monitoring
TB-01	Nez Perce	46.41657, -116.799416	Stream temperature monitoring
TB-02	Nez Perce	46.415617, -116.796834	Stream temperature monitoring
TB-03	Nez Perce	46.436685, -116.728147	Stream temperature monitoring
TB-04	Nez Perce	46.438487, -116.732616	Stream temperature monitoring
TB-05	Nez Perce	46.437532, -116.757073	Stream temperature monitoring
TB-07	Nez Perce	46.415714, -116.796812	Stream temperature monitoring
TG-01	Nez Perce	46.356729, -116.766213	Stream temperature monitoring
TG-02	Nez Perce	46.344535, -116.759429	Stream temperature monitoring
WC-01	Nez Perce	46.32596, -116.831923	Stream temperature monitoring
WC-02	Nez Perce	46.16871, -116.737825	Stream temperature monitoring
WC-03	Nez Perce	46.16871, -116.737825	Stream temperature monitoring
WC-04	Nez Perce	46.183623, -116.733880	Stream temperature monitoring
WC-05	Nez Perce	46.331603, -116.836115	Stream temperature monitoring