

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
Bonneville Power Administration
Kootenai River Habitat Restoration at Bonners Ferry Project
Finding of No Significant Impact
May 2015

Summary

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is announcing its environmental findings regarding the Kootenai River Habitat Restoration at Bonners Ferry Project. BPA proposes to fund the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (Tribe) to restore portions of the Kootenai River in Bonners Ferry, Idaho. The project would involve installing structures on the river banks and excavating areas in the river to create deeper pools of water, as well as developing and enhancing islands to be planted with native riparian vegetation. The project would improve Kootenai River habitat to benefit Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed Kootenai White Sturgeon and other native fish, would complement other restoration on the Kootenai River, and would help mitigate for effects caused by Libby Dam located upstream in Montana.

BPA issued and requested public comment on a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) (DOE/EA-1973 dated February 2015) that evaluated the proposed action and its potential environmental effects. Based on the analysis in the EA, BPA has determined that the proposed action is not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 United States Code [USC] 4321 *et seq.*). Therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required, and BPA is issuing this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the proposed action. Comments received on the draft EA, as well as the responses to the comments, are provided in the final EA.

The attached Mitigation Action Plan (MAP) lists all of the mitigation measures that BPA and the Tribe are committed to implementing as part of the proposed action. The FONSI also includes a statement of findings on how the Proposed Action effects wetlands and floodplains. Effects to wetlands and floodplains would be avoided where possible and minimized by the mitigation measures (see attached Mitigation Action Plan) where there is no practicable alternative.

Public Availability

BPA will mail this FONSI to interested parties, post the FONSI on its website (<https://www.bpa.gov/goto/BonnersFerry>), and mail a notification of availability to potentially affected parties.

Project Background

Under the Pacific Northwest Power Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act, 16 USC § 839b(h)(10)(A), BPA has an obligation to protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife, and their habitats, affected by the development and operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS). To help accomplish this, the Act requires BPA to fund fish and wildlife protection, mitigation, and enhancement actions consistent with the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's (Council) Fish and Wildlife Program, the purposes of the Act, and other environmental laws. Under this program, the Council reviews habitat improvement (or restoration) plans submitted by various entities, and makes recommendations to BPA about

which fish and wildlife projects to fund. In addition, BPA shares responsibilities with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) under a biological opinion issued by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2006 to help FCRPS operations avoid jeopardizing Kootenai River white sturgeon, which are listed as endangered under the ESA. Protecting and enhancing sturgeon habitat helps fulfill BPA's obligations under the biological opinion.

BPA began funding the Tribe to collect and analyze data of Kootenai River habitat conditions under the Council's Program in 2006, and the Tribe completed the Kootenai River Habitat Restoration Program Master Plan in 2009 (Kootenai, 2009 <http://www.restoringthekootenai.org/habitatRestoration/masterPlan/>). In 2011, the Tribe submitted a proposal to the Council to implement specific habitat restoration projects consistent with the framework presented in the Master Plan. In 2012, the Council's Independent Scientific Review Panel reviewed the Kootenai River Habitat Restoration Program and the list of proposed projects, and based on that review, the Council recommended that BPA fund the proposal.

Proposed Action

Under the proposed action, BPA would fund the Kootenai River Habitat Restoration Project at Bonners Ferry, which would enhance in-river, riparian and aquatic habitats to benefit juvenile and adult Kootenai River white sturgeon, listed as endangered under the ESA and other native fish and wildlife species found in and along the river. The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho would implement the proposed project in two areas of the Kootenai River—the Bonners Ferry Islands project area and the Straight Reach project area.

The Bonners Ferry Island project area is just upstream of the US Highway 95/2 Bridge. At this location, the proposed project calls for building two islands on existing mid-channel bars; excavating three deep pools in the riverbed; building two pool-forming structures; stabilizing banks; and establishing new areas of riparian habitat along the north and south shorelines of the river. These restoration actions would improve habitat conditions for adult and juvenile Kootenai River white sturgeon, bull trout, burbot, and other native fish and wildlife.

The Straight Reach project area is located downstream of the Union Pacific Railroad Bridge. Restoration activities here would include creating two pool-forming structures and placement of rock substrate clusters on the river bottom. The pool-forming structures would provide areas for Kootenai River white sturgeon and other native fish to rest during their migration through this reach. The rock clusters on the river bottom would provide suitable areas for Kootenai River white sturgeon to attach eggs and provide places for very young sturgeon to hide.

No-Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative, BPA would not fund the Kootenai River Habitat Restoration at Bonners Ferry and the Tribe would not build the proposed action as described. In addition, BPA would not use the project to help satisfy its fish and wildlife mitigation obligations under the Northwest Power Act, or further support habitat improvement efforts identified in the Libby Dam Biological Opinion.

Significance of the Potential Effects of the Proposed Action

BPA evaluated the potential effects of the proposed action and the no-action alternative on human and natural resources to determine whether the alternatives could cause significant environmental effects--the effects analysis for the proposed action is in Chapter 3 of the EA. To summarize potential environmental effects, BPA used four impact levels (i.e., high, moderate, low, and no impact). These impact levels are based on the considerations of context and intensity defined in the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.27). High effects could be considered significant effects, while moderate and low effects would not. The proposed action would have no significant effects.

The following discussion summarizes the proposed action's potential effects and the reasons these effects would not be significant.

Soils and Geology

Overall effects to soils and geology would be low.

- Increases in turbidity and soil erosion during construction activities would be short term, while bank stabilization and native vegetation plantings would reduce the current stream bank erosion over the long term.

Wetlands

Overall effects to wetlands would be low.

- The removal of 3.7 acres of low-functioning wetlands due to island creation and stream bank modification would be offset by the restoration of 10.7 acres of properly functioning wetlands created as part of the proposed action.

Water Resources

Overall effects to water resources would be low.

- Changes to river flow would be localized, increases in turbidity and soil erosion during construction activities would be short term, and bank stabilization and native vegetation plantings would help reduce localized river turbidity over the long term.
- Existing contaminants in the river sediments are less than the sediment quality guidelines for river sediment dredging so disturbing sediments would not increase contamination in the river.
- Although the project would potentially increase the base floodplain elevation in the area by 0.15 foot, the increase would be accommodated by the Corps operation of Libby Dam, which manages flood risk in Bonners Ferry—no change in how the Corps operates Libby Dam to prevent flooding in Bonners Ferry would be required.

Fish and Fish Habitat

Overall effects to fish and fish habitats would be low.

- Increases in turbidity and underwater noise during construction would cause some effects on fish behavior, but few fish are expected to be in the area during construction. Once completed, the proposed project would increase high quality habitats for native fish.

Recreation

Overall effects to recreation would be low.

- Construction is proposed from late August through November, a time when fewer recreational boaters, tubers or swimmers would be in the area.
- Use of the boat ramp by construction vessels would cause only short 10-minute delays in recreational boaters' use of the ramp.
- The new pool-forming structures built out into the river would be visible by boaters and tubers and allow them enough time to avoid them.

Cultural Resources

Overall effects to cultural resources would be low.

- A cultural resource survey showed that previously recorded sites near the project would not be affected.
- If unanticipated sites are discovered during construction, they could be affected; however, the draft EA and mitigation action plan include requirements related to unintended discoveries of cultural resources, such as requiring the contractor to stop work, notify appropriate entities, and to first try to avoid potential effects.

Visual Resources

Overall effects to visual resources would be low.

- Construction activities would be visible from various locations in Bonners Ferry during the summer of 2015 and 2016, but these activities would be temporary.
- Although the project would change the Kootenai River's visual landscape where it flows through Bonners Ferry, the proposed islands, pool forming structures and bank stabilization would not be inconsistent with the existing landscape and over time as vegetation grows, project elements would resemble natural features that occur along large rivers.

Noise

Overall effects to noise would be low to moderate.

- Although noise levels during construction activities would be over typical background levels, particularly within 2,000 feet of construction activities and during pile driving in the summer of 2016 (affecting nearby residences for a period of two to three weeks), noise disturbances would be temporary and would cease once construction was completed.

Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases

Overall effects to air quality and greenhouse gases would be low.

- Construction activities would cause some temporary increases in dust and particulate matter.
- The amount of greenhouse gases that would be released from construction vehicles during construction periods in 2015 and 2016 would be a fraction of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's reporting threshold of 25,000 tons per year of carbon dioxide equivalent.

Public Health and Safety

Overall effects to public health and safety would be low.

- Coordination would take place with the Boundary County Sheriff so that the Boundary Search and Rescue boat ramp could be used for emergency operations during construction staging.

Transportation and Utilities

Overall effects to transportation and utilities would be low.

- Construction vehicles would increase traffic in the area, including through a residential area, and would periodically block traffic, but delays would be short-term and would cease once construction was completed.
- The US95/2 Highway Bridge and Union Pacific Railroad Bridge would not be affected by the project based on hydraulic analysis showing no changes to river conditions near these bridges.
- The Eugene Water and Electric Board power lines that cross the project area would not be affected because Eugene Water and Electric Board's grading clearance requirements would be followed during construction.
- The City's Backup water intake located within the project area would not be affected because the depth of flow passing over the intake structure would not affect the City's ability to draw water.

Socioeconomics

Overall effects to socioeconomics would be low.

- During construction activities, the approximately 20 workers would have a low effect on the overall population, would increase the use of short term housing slightly, and would increase local economic activity through construction spending temporarily.
- Effects of construction activities would be temporary and would likely have no disproportionate effects on minority or low-income populations.

Other Environmental Elements

Effects to wildlife, vegetation, and land use would be low—no ESA-listed wildlife or plant species would be affected, habitat and vegetation removed is of low quality and would be replaced by planting 10 acres of native vegetation, and effects on land use would be limited to temporary use of agricultural and pasture land for construction access and staging.

Determination

Based on the information in the EA, as summarized here, BPA has determined that the proposed action is not a major federal action that significantly affects the quality of the human environment, within the meaning of NEPA (42 USC 4321 *et. seq*). Therefore, preparation of an EIS is not required, and BPA is issuing this FONSI.

Issued in Portland, Oregon

/s/ F. Lorraine Bodi
F. Lorraine Bodi, Vice President
Environment, Fish and Wildlife

May 14, 2015
Date

Mitigation Action Plan

This mitigation action plan for the Kootenai River Habitat Restoration at Bonners Ferry Project includes all of the mitigation measures recommended in the Environmental Assessment (DOE/EA-1973) to mitigate adverse environmental effects. It includes some measures that are essential to ensure there are no significant effects of the proposed action, and other measures to decrease effects that could occur, but would not be considered significant.

Mitigation measures have been incorporated into the project planning and design, and will be implemented during construction and after construction is completed (when the site is being stabilized and revegetated).

The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho will implement this project, and contractors will build it. To ensure that the contractor will implement mitigation measures, the relevant portions of this mitigation action plan will be included in the construction contract specifications (the directions to the contractor) for the project. This will obligate the contractor to implement the mitigation measures that relate to their responsibilities during construction and post-construction.

If you have general questions about the project, contact the Project Manager, Lee Watts, at 503-230-4625 or vlwatts@bpa.gov. If you have questions about the mitigation action plan, contact the Environmental Lead, Ted Gresh, at 503-230-5756 or esgresh@bpa.gov. This mitigation action plan may be amended if revisions are needed due to new information or if there are any significant project changes.

Mitigation Action Table

Environmental Resource	Mitigation Measure	Timing of Implementation
Soils and Geology		
SG-1	Prepare and implement erosion and sedimentation control and a stormwater pollution prevention plan for construction activities to minimize erosion and soil loss (e.g., use silt fences, straw bales, interceptor trenches or other perimeter sediment management devices; maintain as necessary throughout construction).	Pre-Construction During Construction Post Construction
SG-2	Locate staging areas in previously disturbed or graveled areas to minimize soil and vegetation disturbance, where practicable.	Pre-Construction During Construction
SG-3	Design and build access roads to minimize drainage from the road surface directly into surface waters, and direct sediment-laden waters into vegetated areas.	Pre-Construction During Construction
SG-4	Inspect and maintain access roads and other facilities during construction to ensure proper function and nominal erosion levels.	During Construction
SG-5	Reseed disturbed areas, monitor seed germination, and implement contingency measures as necessary until areas disturbed from construction activity are stabilized.	Post Construction
Wetlands		
Wet-1	Identify clearing limits on all construction drawings and flag as no-work areas in field before construction.	Pre-Construction During Construction
Wet-2	Revegetate temporarily disturbed areas (including wetlands) with appropriate native species using seed mixes that meet the requirements of federal, state, and county noxious weed control regulations and guidelines.	Post Construction
Wet-3	Take actions to control potential noxious weed infestations (treat known infestations before ground disturbance, ensure construction equipment is free of weeds and weed seeds, clean equipment and vehicles after working in infested areas, maintain weed-free staging areas, implement post-construction noxious weed control as-needed).	During Construction
Wet-4	Implement best management practices during construction to minimize adverse effects on wetlands (e.g., limit wetland disturbance areas; flag or stake wetland boundaries; refuel machinery and store fuels away from wetlands; develop and implement erosion and sedimentation control plan).	During Construction
Water Resources		
WR-1	Deposit and stabilize all excavated material not re-used in an upland area outside of floodplains.	During Construction

WR-2	Follow the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality's Catalog of Stormwater Best Management Practices for Idaho Cities and Counties to create a stormwater pollution prevention plan for construction activities. Use and maintain this plan throughout construction to minimize erosion and soil loss (e.g., use silt fences, straw bales, interceptor trenches or other perimeter sediment management devices).	Pre-Construction During Construction
WR-3	Implement measures to prevent stockpile erosion during rain events (e.g., surround piles with compost berms, cover piles with impervious materials, or use other equally effective methods).	During Construction
WR-4	Minimize staging areas to the size necessary to conduct the work, and locate the staging areas in previously disturbed areas at least 150 feet from the river or wetlands.	Pre-Construction During Construction
WR-5	Create and use a spill prevention, control and countermeasure plan to minimize the potential for spills of hazardous material, which includes provisions for storage of hazardous materials, and refueling of construction equipment outside of riparian zones, a spill containment and recovery plan, and notification and activation protocols.	Pre-Construction During Construction
WR-6	Store spill containment kits at each work site, and train the construction crews in proper use.	During Construction
WR-7	Wash all equipment before moving it to the project site, to minimize the introduction of foreign materials and fluids to the project site.	During Construction Post Construction
WR-8	Retrofit hydraulically operated equipment that may work below the Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM) with vegetable-based fluid in the hydraulic system.	Pre-Construction During Construction
WR-9	Inspect all equipment to ensure it is free of oil, hydraulic fluid, and diesel fuel leaks. Repair detected leaks in the vehicle staging area before the vehicle resumes operation. Document inspections in a record that is available for review on request.	Pre-Construction During Construction
WR-10	Locate vehicle staging, cleaning, maintenance, refueling, fuel storage areas, and sanitary facilities, such as chemical toilets, at least 150 feet the river or wetlands.	Pre-Construction During Construction
WR-11	Clean all equipment operated in stream before beginning operations below the bankfull elevation to remove all external oil, grease and dirt. Every day, inspect all power equipment within 150 feet of the water for fluid leaks.	Pre-Construction During Construction
WR-12	Diaper any stationary power equipment (e.g., generators) operated within 150 feet of any stream, water body or wetland to prevent leaks.	During Construction
Fish and Fish Habitat		
FISH-1	Conduct work below the OHWM from August through November in 2015 and 2016.	During Construction

FISH-2	Operate machinery for below-OHWM construction from the top of the stream bank along adjacent upland areas, to the extent possible.	During Construction
FISH-3	Protect existing riparian and wetland vegetation, to the extent possible.	Pre-Construction During Construction
Recreation		
Rec-1	Install temporary signage upstream at the Tribally-owned Twin Rivers Canyon Resort boat launch, which is located on part of the Kootenai Indian Reservation, to inform boaters of construction activities occurring downstream in the Bonners Ferry area.	During Construction
Rec-2	Install permanent signs upstream at the Twin Rivers boat ramp requesting that boaters and tubers stay clear of the restoration area in order to protect the restoration work. Signs would also contain an educational element to describe the different project locations, the types of structures, and the benefits they provide for fish.	Post Construction
Cultural Resources		
CR-1	Protect any unanticipated cultural resources discovered during construction as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stop all work; cover and protect find in place - Notify Kootenai Tribe's project manager who will notify the BPA cultural resources specialist and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho Cultural Resource Program - Implement mitigation or other measures as instructed by BPA 	During Construction
Visual Resources		
VR-1	Retain existing vegetation, when possible, to visually screen new disturbances, during construction.	During Construction
VR-2	Reseed and plant disturbed areas with appropriate native species, and control weeds, following construction.	Post Construction
Noise		
Noise-1	Limit construction noise to normal daytime working hours.	During Construction
Air Quality and Greenhouse Gases		
AQ-1	Use water trucks to control dust during construction, as needed.	During Construction

AQ-2	Ensure that all vehicle engines are maintained in good operating condition to minimize exhaust emissions.	During Construction
AQ-3	Implement vehicle idling restrictions.	During Construction
AQ-4	Encourage the use of the proper size of equipment for each job.	Pre-Construction
AQ-5	Use alternative fuels for stationary equipment at the construction sites, such as propane, or use electrical power, where practicable.	During Construction
AQ-6	Reduce electricity use in the construction office by using compact fluorescent bulbs and turning off computers and other electronic equipment every night.	During Construction
AQ-7	Recycle or salvage nonhazardous construction and demolition debris, where practicable.	During Construction Post Construction
Public Health and Safety		
PHS-1	Follow agreed to protocols for using the Boundary Search and Rescue boat ramp.	Pre-Construction During Construction
PHS-2	Confine vehicle fueling and maintenance to approved locations.	During Construction
Transportation and Utilities		
Trans-1	Keep construction activities and equipment clear of residential driveways, to the greatest extent possible.	During Construction
Trans-2	Employ traffic control flaggers and post signs along roads warning of construction activity and merging traffic for temporary interruptions of traffic, where needed.	Pre-Construction During Construction
Trans-3	Coordinate with BNSF prior to construction to determine if a flagger is needed at the unmarked crossing of the BNSF rail line to avoid train conflicts or delays.	During Construction
Socioeconomics,		
Socio-1	Limit construction noise to daytime working hours.	During Construction
Socio-2	Use water trucks to control dust during construction, as needed.	During Construction
Socio-3	Keep construction activities and equipment clear of residential driveways to the greatest extent possible.	During Construction