



Department of Energy

Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, Oregon 97208-3621

ENVIRONMENT, FISH AND WILDLIFE

July 17, 2015

In reply refer to: KEC-4

To: Parties interested in the Wallooskee-Youngs Confluence Restoration Project

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) has finalized the environmental assessment (EA) to evaluate whether to fund the proposed Wallooskee-Youngs Confluence Restoration Project in Clatsop County, Oregon. Based on the final EA, BPA is issuing a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) and has made a decision to proceed with the project. This letter describes BPA's decision, the construction schedule, and how to obtain additional information.

BPA will fund the Wallooskee-Youngs Confluence Restoration Project on a 221-acre property at the confluence of the Wallooskee and Youngs rivers five miles southeast of the Columbia River near Astoria, Oregon. The project will restore and enhance 193 acres of tidal wetlands and includes modifying a levee to allow tidal influence to return to the area, creating a network of tidal channels, and restoring native vegetation. A portion of state highway Oregon Route 202 and a BPA transmission line and access road within the project area will be modified to withstand the restored tidal regime.

Background:

The project will help BPA meet some of its federal Endangered Species Act obligations as defined in the Federal Columbia River Power System, 2014 Supplemental Biological Opinion (BiOp). BPA works with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation to offset the effects of federal dams on salmon and steelhead. Estuary habitat improvements are a key component of this work. The estuary's nutrient-rich habitat provides food and refuge for juvenile salmon as they make their critical transition from fresh water to salt water. Estuary projects can be complex, often involving a diversity of land owners and issues. The goal is to reconnect areas of the Columbia River floodplain and restore juvenile habitat by opening dikes or upgrading tide gates or culverts. Fish feeding in the estuary can grow quickly, better positioning them to survive in the ocean. Since 2007, the agencies have protected and restored more than 5,000 acres of estuary habitat, greatly increasing the survival benefits for salmon and steelhead in the estuary. The project will also provide habitat for wildlife such as deer, elk, waterfowl, and river otter.

BPA prepared an EA to help the agency determine if the proposed action would cause significant impacts that would warrant preparing an environmental impact statement. BPA released the draft EA for public review and comment in December 29, 2014 and received comments from seven entities. The final EA provides responses to those comments and minor revisions to the EA. Based on the EA analysis and mitigation measures to help lessen impacts, BPA has found that the Proposed Action will not cause any significant impacts, and, therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

Project construction is expected to begin in the summer of 2015 and continue through the spring of 2016. Astoria Wetlands, LLC, an environmental resources company, currently owns the property and would conduct the restoration work. The Cowlitz Indian Tribe would assist in project implementation and provide long-term stewardship by managing the property to benefit fish and wildlife.

For More Information:

The final EA and FONSI are enclosed if you previously requested it. If you did not receive a copy of these documents and would like one, please call our toll-free document request line at 1-800-622-4520. Leave a request naming this project and giving your name and complete mailing address. Documents are also available on the internet at www.bpa.gov/goto/WallooskeeYoungs.

If you have questions regarding the environmental process, please contact me at 503-230-3796 or dlrose@bpa.gov or Jesse Wilson, Contract Environmental Protection Specialist, David Evans Associates, at jcwilson@bpa.gov or 503-230-4506. You can also reach us toll free at 800-622-4519.

Thank you for your interest in our work.

Sincerely,

/s/ Donald L. Rose

Donald L. Rose
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Enclosures (if requested):

Final EA
FONSI and Mitigation Action Plan