

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Yakima River mile 89.5 Floodplain Restoration, Phase 1

Project No.: 1992-062-000

Project Manager: Michelle O'Malley

Location: Yakima County, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.20
Protect/restore/improve fish and wildlife habitat

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to provide funds to the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (Yakama Nation) for restoration activities in an area of the historical floodplain along approximately six miles of the Yakima River (RM 87-91), in Yakima County, Oregon. The activities would occur on Yakama Confederated Tribes reservation lands.

The entire restoration project has been designed to improve floodplain and side-channel connectivity to restore high-quality habitat for native avian, terrestrial, and aquatic communities. The project objectives include: to the extent possible, increase inundation of floodplain, wetland, and side-channels— emphasizing the area cut off by levee construction; reduce or not increase flood hazard for properties adjacent to the project area; and enhance fish and wildlife habitat in the floodplain, side channels, and mainstem Yakima River.

Phase 1 would consist of installing four engineered large wood (LW) jam structures by excavating stream gravel and boulder fill in an area of approximately 2,400 square feet (about 0.05 acre). Log snags would be installed using vibratory pile driving equipment to a minimum depth of 18 foot below ground. A total area of approximately 4.55 acres would be disturbed during LW jam installation including staging and material storage areas and access routes. Prior to LW jam placement, cofferdams would be installed to isolate work areas from flowing water. Phase 1 is anticipated to take up to two weeks to implement in the fall of 2019.

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/ Michele Palmer

Michele Palmer
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: October 29, 2019

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.

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Project Site Description

Phase 1 of the project is located in Yakima County, Washington, approximately one mile southwest of Zillah, Washington, along the southwest streambank of the Yakima River (Township 11 North, Range 20 East, Sections 35 and 36). Vegetation in the project area consists of trees, shrubs, and riparian plants with agricultural fields adjacent to the project area. The project site includes currently disconnected side channels that historically connected the Yakima River to the floodplain. The land is owned by the Yakama Nation.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Since the project area is located on Yakama Nation reservation lands, the Yakama Nation conducted cultural resources surveys and Section 106 consultation through its Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO). On October 24, 2019, BPA initiated Section 106 consultation with the Yakama Nation THPO and requested concurrence on BPA's determination that the implementation of the proposed undertaking would result in no historic properties affected based on field survey results. The THPO concurred with BPA's determination via a letter dated October 29, 2019.</p>		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Excavation for LW jam placement would disturb soils; erosion control measures and revegetation would be implemented to minimize impacts.</p>		
3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> No special-status species are present. Up to 4.55 acres of vegetation would be disturbed associated with excavation to install the LW jams and with access through disconnected channels to the project site. Disturbance areas would be revegetated with native seed and woody plants after project completion.</p>		
4. Wildlife (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> No special-status wildlife species have been documented in, or adjacent to the project area; and no designated habitat is present. Wildlife may be temporarily (up to two weeks) disturbed by construction noise and increased traffic.</p>		

5. **Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish**

(including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)



Explanation: The project would disturb approximately 0.05 acres of stream gravel and boulders along a streambank of the Yakima River. Yakama Nation obtained a Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404 permit on October 23, 2019, and a CWA Section 401 certification on October 17, 2019.

Fish would be subject to temporary noise and elevated turbidity associated with LW jam installation. The proposed project would be done in accordance with BPA's Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) biological opinion for effects to Middle Columbia River Steelhead. The HIP project notification form was submitted to the Services on October 1, 2019. Because an extension to the in-water work window would be required, a variance was requested and approved by the NMFS -Columbia Basin Branch on October 16, 2019, and by the USFWS - Central Washington Field Office on October 10, 2019. No additional special-status fish species were identified in the project area.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: No wetlands would be disturbed.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: No new wells or use of ground water proposed; depth of disturbance would be about 18 feet and is not anticipated to draw down ground water levels; spill prevention measures would be present on site to reduce the risk of groundwater contamination.

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



Explanation: No change to existing land use would occur. The project is on Yakama Nation reservation lands.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: New LW jam structures would be visually consistent with adjacent vegetation and would not be located in a visually sensitive area.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Temporary (up to two weeks), small amounts of dust and vehicle emissions would be generated during construction.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Temporary (up to two weeks) construction noise would be generated during local approved daylight hours.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: No known soil contamination or hazardous conditions, no adjacent CERCLA sites, and no changes to electric and magnetic fields.

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, if necessary:

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: The project sponsor, the Yakama Nation, would complete the project on reservation lands that are owned by the Yakama Nation.

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

Signed: /s/ Michele Palmer
Michele Palmer
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: October 29, 2019