

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Antelope Creek and Willow Creek Property Acquisition and Stewardship Funding

Project No.: 1995-057-00; BPA-80882

Project Manager: Lee Watts

Location: Bonneville County, Idaho

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 Idaho Department of Fish and Game to purchase the Antelope Creek and Willow Creek property, an approximately 1,555-acre parcel of land (consisting of a western, approximately 640-acre parcel referred to as 'Antelope Creek' and an eastern, about 915-acre parcel referred to as 'Willow Creek') located about 30 miles southeast of Idaho Falls in Bonneville County, Idaho. 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 maintenance of the property to the landowner, Idaho Department of Fish and Game.

Funding the purchase of the property and long-term stewardship would serve as partial mitigation for the construction and operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System, which includes the following dams in southern Idaho: Boise Diversion, Black Canyon, Anderson Ranch, Palisades, and Minidoka ("southern Idaho dams"). This land purchase would specifically satisfy some of BPA's commitments made in the September 2014 "Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Memorandum of Agreement Between The State of Idaho and Bonneville Power Administration."

The property consists of a unique mosaic of vegetation types and topography that provides excellent habitat for a wide variety of wildlife, ranging from riparian areas, shrub/scrub, grass/forb, mixed, deciduous, and coniferous forest, and active beaver ponds. The Idaho Department of Fish and Game would develop a management plan to guide the protection and enhancement of habitat and other resources on the property. 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/ Michele Palmer
Michele Palmer
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange
Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: September 10, 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

The approximately 1,555-acre property (consisting of the Antelope Creek and Willow Creek parcels) is situated about 30 miles southeast of Idaho Falls and accessed via Kepps Crossing road. Surrounding uses include the Idaho Department of Fish and Game's Tex Creek Wildlife Management Area (WMA) to the north and private grazing and ranching in the remaining vicinity. The property is undeveloped and has been used for grazing and ranching.

The property consists of a unique mosaic of vegetation types and topography that provides excellent habitat for a wide variety of wildlife, ranging from riparian areas, shrub/scrub, grass/forb, mixed, deciduous, and coniferous forest, and active beaver ponds. The property provides transitional habitat for big game migrating to Tex Creek WMA, summer range for moose and mule deer, and fawning habitat for deer. The property adds sportsmen access to the WMA. The property is included within the Area of Interest for Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse and Greater Sage Grouse.

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"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> 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 the Idaho Department of Fish and Game would comply with all applicable laws and regulations.		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> See explanation for #1 above.		
3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> See explanation for #1 above.		
4. Wildlife (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> See explanation for #1 above.		
5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> See explanation for #1 above.		

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

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

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

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, 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: A public notification letter and map of the property would be mailed to neighboring landowners, stakeholders, and relevant elected officials and other interested parties prior to the property closing. Advertisements would also be placed in local newspapers, and information would be posted on BPA's website.

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, ECF-4
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: September 10, 2019