

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Fish and Wildlife Habitat Protection, Restoration, and Improvement Activities – 2019 through 2023

Project No.: Multiple

Project Manager: Multiple

Location: Multiple locations in Oregon, Washington, Montana, Nevada, and Idaho

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.20 Protection of Cultural Resources, Fish and Wildlife Habitat

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund habitat protection, restoration and improvement projects that are implemented by state, local, and tribally-sponsored fish and wildlife programs (project sponsors) consistent with the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's (Council) Fish and Wildlife Program. Activities implemented by project sponsors would include small-scale habitat protection, restoration, and improvement actions that may have the potential for short-term effects but no potential for significant effects with conditions on environmental resources, including Endangered Species Act-listed species or designated critical habitat. These actions would result in long-term benefits for terrestrial and aquatic species and their habitats.

Habitat protection, restoration, and improvement activities could include the following actions:

- **Vegetation planting and non-native plant control:** Planting and maintaining vegetation or removing vegetation by mechanical, biological, or chemical means or with controlled burns.
- **Irrigation and water management actions:** Installation of water conservation measures, such as irrigation efficiencies, or developing alternative water sources for animals such as wildlife guzzlers and troughs.
- **Fish, hydrologic, and geomorphologic surveys:** Installing stream gauges and passive integrated transponder (PIT) tag arrays; conducting snorkel surveys; conducting aerial surveys (e.g. drones, airplanes, helicopter); conducting site assessments (e.g. pebble counts, elevation surveys); ongoing data collection.
- **Terrestrial habitat features:** Installing structures that mimic natural features and provide support for wildlife foraging, breeding, or resting/refuge, such as nest boxes/platforms, avian perches, snags, guzzlers, and artificial roosting sites.
- **Fencing:** Installing fences to protect sensitive resources, such as cattle exclusion fencing in riparian areas.
- **Road and trail maintenance:** Decommissioning or relocating unimproved roads, or improving roads to provide access or reduce runoff; also includes culvert and bridge maintenance.
- **Nutrient enhancement:** Adding nutrients, such as fish carcasses or direct nutrient introduction methods, to water bodies to improve biological diversity.
- **Instream habitat forming structures:** Installing of habitat structures that do not include ballast, boulders, excavation, or structural connections.
- **Fish passage restoration:** Removing instream structures with a total head measurement of less than 3 feet, or installing grade control structures that address headcuts less than 18 inches in height.

A project covered under this Categorical Exclusion may include one or more of the protection, restoration, and improvement activities listed above, such as vegetation control and installation of habitat forming features. Actions proposed would be reviewed by the BPA environmental compliance lead to ensure that project activities fall within the range of those described in this Categorical Exclusion prior to initiating work. Site specific conservation or mitigation measures would be identified for the project, and project sponsors would be responsible for implementing those measures in addition to any other applicable local, state and Federal laws and regulations.

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/ Claire McClory
Claire McClory
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

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

Date: September 24, 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

Habitat improvement projects located within the Columbia River Basin, including Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Montana, and Nevada.

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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> BPA Historian and/or Archaeologist reviewed proposed activities and determined that these types of activities are covered under an existing Section 106 consultation or do not have the potential to cause significant effects to historic properties. In the event any archaeological material is encountered during project activities, work would be stopped immediately and a BPA Archaeologist and Historian would be notified, as well as consulting parties.</p>		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Minor, temporary impact to soils and geology during construction.</p>		
3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Work would have no potential for significant effects with conditions on environmental resources, including Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed plants or Federal or state special-status species and habitats. If ESA-listed species are present, the project would result in no effect determination or would be low risk according to the current programmatic biological opinion issued by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on the effects of Bonneville's Habitat Improvement Program (HIP).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Project sponsor would adhere to all applicable site-specific conservation measures identified, including, but not limited to, HIP conservation measures or other mitigation measures. 		
4. Wildlife (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Work would have no potential for significant effects with conditions on environmental resources, including ESA-listed wildlife or Federal or state special-status species and habitats. If ESA-listed species are present, the project would result in a no effect determination or would be low risk according to the current biological opinion issued by the USFWS on the effects of Bonneville's HIP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Project sponsor would adhere to all applicable site-specific conservation measures identified, including, but not limited to, HIP conservation measures or other mitigation measures (e.g., construction or vegetation removal restrictions under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act or Migratory Bird Treaty Act). 		

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

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

Explanation: Effects to water bodies would be minimal; limited to temporary, low level turbidity. There would be no net rise in floodplain elevations. Actions would have no effect or be classified as low risk to species according to the current programmatic biological opinion issued by the USFWS and the National Marine Fisheries Service on the effects of Bonneville's HIP.

- Project sponsors are required to obtain any applicable Clean Water Act permits and authorizations, as needed.
- Project sponsor would adhere to all applicable site-specific conservation measures identified, including, but not limited to, HIP conservation measures or other mitigation measures.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: Project sponsors are required to obtain any applicable Clean Water Act or wetland fill permits and authorizations, as needed.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: No impacts to groundwater or aquifers.

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

Explanation: Some changes to land use could occur where habitat features exclude or modify existing uses.

- If a project occurs in a specially-designated area, project sponsor would provide documentation of any applicable permits or authorizations to the BPA environmental compliance lead prior to project initiation.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: Some changes to visual quality could occur in the immediate project area.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: Minor, temporary generation of emissions associated with increased vehicle traffic or potential minor vegetation removal during construction or implementation of habitat protection, restoration, and improvement actions.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: Minor, intermittent noise during construction or implementation of habitat protection, restoration, and improvement actions.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: All projects are required to use best management practices to protect worker health and safety. Any activities involving hazardous materials would be disposed of at a designated hazardous waste facility.

Evaluation of Other Integral Elements

The proposed actions would also meet conditions that are integral elements of the categorical exclusion. The proposed actions 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 Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act 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: Implementation of habitat protection, restoration, and improvement projects would not cause impacts to surrounding landowners. Project sponsors would be responsible for coordinating with underlying and surrounding landowners prior to initiating work.

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

Signed: /s/ Claire McClory
Claire McClory
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: /s/ September 24, 2019