Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: Piscoe Creek Culvert Replacement Project

Project No.: 1997-056-00

Project Manager: Jamie Cleveland, EWU-4

Location: Yakima County, WA

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 the Yakama/Klickitat Fisheries Project (YKFP) to implement the Piscoe Creek Culvert Replacement Project located in the Yakima Basin watershed. The project would consist of replacing a culvert on Piscoe Creek, a tributary to Klickitat River, to restore fish passage, alleviate chronic maintenance issues, and facilitate the longitudinal movement of wood and sediment across a range of streamflow conditions. The upper Klickitat and Piscoe Creek provide spawning and rearing habitat for mid-Columbia ESA-threatened steelhead and resident rainbow trout.

The existing crossing is composed of two four-foot corrugated metal culverts, which would be removed and replaced with a 45' long by 15' wide natural-bottom bridge. Ground-disturbing activities would include excavation/backfill along the stream channel, road bed, and new bridge installation site. Streambank materials would be excavated to achieve the design grade and the rest of the required excavated materials would come from the staging area. The excavated materials would be used to fill and grade the northern road regrade area of Forest Road 80, the road regrade area at the bridge, and the bridge/channel. The northern portion of Forest Road 80 would be regraded to provide a drier and firmer road base to improve access and prevent future washout and overtopping during high water events. This work would also include minor upgrades to the streambed and banks to align the channel appropriately; as well as lifting the road bed over the culvert to provide approaches to the bridge. The construction in-water window begins in September, during base flow conditions.

The work area would be isolated via fish screens/fish salvage and water rerouting. Rerouting the flow requires the installation of cofferdams and a diversion pump. It is expected that the entire Piscoe Creek flow could be diverted around the work area using two 6" trash pumps.

A staging area would be established at least 150-feet from the stream banks for equipment storage and refueling. Site access would be from Forest Road 80. After construction, the borrow area and any disturbed surfaces would be replanted with native seed and live plants.

Inspection and maintenance of the project site would occur annually, and could result in minor on-site adjustments to riverbank or channel bed conditions as needed to maintain project success, and additional vegetation plantings and management.

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/ Shawn Skinner
Shawn Skinner
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel *August 18, 2020*
Sarah T. Biegel Date
NEPA Compliance Officer

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.

Proposed Action: Piscoe Creek Culvert Replacement Project

Project Site Description

The proposed action would occur in riparian areas within the Klickitat River Watershed, located on the Yakama Nation Reservation. Piscoe Creek is a 4th order tributary of the Klickitat River which Forest Road 80 crosses over approximately 0.34 miles upstream of its confluence with the Klickitat River. Piscoe Creek culvert is currently undersized for flow conditions and does not provide adequate fish passage. The crossing has been a chronic road maintenance problem over the years because of frequent road washouts due to failed or blocked culverts during high flows. The maintenance performed to re-open the crossing after each failure has often left conditions for upstream fish passage impaired for most age classes of *O. mykiss* (Rainbow Trout/Steelhead). The crossing is also sited along an alluvial fan surface created by Piscoe Creek where it meets the flatter Klickitat River valley.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA determined that the implementation of the proposed undertaking would result in no adverse effect to historic properties in a letter dated February 13, 2020 (WA 2019 142). The Yakama Nation Tribal Historic Preservation Office provided recommendations and concurred with BPA's determination on January 20, 2020.

Notes:

- An archaeological monitor would work with field crews to ensure that known isolates are relocated or avoided during implementation.
- In the event that archaeological or historic materials are discovered during project activities, work in the immediate vicinity must stop, the area be secured, and the concerned tribe's cultural staff and cultural committee notified.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary, minor impacts to soil from increased erosion potential during construction and grading activities. Sediment control BMPs would be installed prior to project implementation to minimize potential for in-stream turbidity or excessive runoff during construction. Work area would be isolated by rerouting water around the work area to prevent increased levels of erosion or turbidity.

3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status, including Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed, plant species are known to be present. Temporary impacts to existing vegetation during grading activities. Post construction plantings and long-term monitoring would re-establish native upland and riparian plant communities.

4. Wildlife (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Minor, temporary impacts to local wildlife habitat from excavation and construction noise expected. ESA-listed species include historic Northern spotted owl (NSO) management circles (a state-designated listing). The project is covered under the Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) Biological Opinion under Section 7 of the ESA with Project Notification Form number 2020043.

Notes:

- Minor noise disturbance would occur outside of the NSO critical nesting period of March 1st to July 15th. No helicopter use proposed for this undertaking.
- Project sponsors would adhere to all applicable site-specific conservation measures identified in the HIP consultation and approval, including construction timing and equipment use restrictions in potential NSO habitat.

5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No known state-listed special-status species present. ESA-listed fish species include Middle Columbia River steelhead. The project is covered under the HIP Biological Opinion under Section 7 of the ESA with Project Notification Form number 2020043. Temporary, minor impacts to migrating fish expected during work area isolation and salvage efforts. The project would result in long-term net benefits to fish species within the project reach from increased fish access to spawning and rearing habitat. A Clean Water Act Nationwide Permit 27 (NWS-2020-724) was obtained to ensure the project meets national water quality standards.

Notes:

- Project sponsors would adhere to all applicable site-specific conservation measures identified in the HIP consultation and approval, including turbidity monitoring requirements and in-water work timing.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands present in the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The water table is expected to be low during base flow conditions. Potential for temporary, minor disturbance to groundwater during streambank construction work. Erosion control measures would be taken to minimize this impact. There would be no long-

term effects or potential for contamination because equipment staging/fueling is at least 150 feet from the stream bank.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change to land use.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change to visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Any increase in emissions from vehicles accessing field sites would be very minor and short term.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Any increase in ambient noise from vehicles accessing field sites would be very minor and short term.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All applicable safety regulations would be followed during work activities.

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: N/A

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

Explanation: N/A

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: N/A

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: N/A

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: All work would occur on the Yakama Nation Reservation and would be implemented by YKFP biologists.

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

Signed: */s/ Shawn Skinner* *August 18, 2020*
Shawn Skinner, ECF-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist