

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Lampson Side Channels Project

**Project No.:** 2007-396-00

**Project Manager:** Corrie Veenstra

**Location:** Umatilla County, Oregon

**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 Walla Walla Basin Watershed Council (WWBWC) to construct the second phase of the Lampson Side Channels Project (Project), an aquatic habitat enhancement project located along the Walla Walla River (river mile 49) about 2.5 miles southeast of Milton-Freewater, Oregon. The project would provide high flow refugia for Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed steelhead, bull trout, and spring Chinook salmon, and would reduce blocked passage and stranding potential along a previously-installed portion of the side channel where sediment deposition at the inlet has diminished flows during moderate and low flow periods. These actions would specifically satisfy some of BPA's Columbia River tributary mitigation commitments begun under the 2008 NMFS' Federal Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion (as supplemented in 2010 and 2014) (2008 BiOp) and ongoing commitments under the 2019 NMFS' Columbia River System BiOp (2019 CRS BiOp).

The Project would include sediment removal along the existing side channel, and upstream excavation of about 400-feet of new side channel with two new inlets. The new inlets would allow for perennial flow along the entire side channel length by taking advantage of sediment-flushing flows from a flow-constricting gravel bar along the Walla Walla River. Wood structures installed at the inlet entrances would further deflect bedload away and reduce the potential for sediment plugging. The new side channel would include pools, wood habitat structures, and temporary bank stabilization and erosion control structures that are designed to hold until native riparian vegetation can be re-established.

Construction would take place during the approved in-water work window, between July 1 and September 30, 2020. A 100-foot by 80-foot temporary staging area with sediment fencing would be established about 100 feet from the stream bank. To prevent any fuel spills during fuel transfer, portable containment equipment would be used during construction. Temporary access roads would be graded with minimal vegetation clearing, and topped with wood chips or underlain with geotextile fabric and topped with rock to stabilize the surface. Work areas would be isolated to reduce turbidity to surface water. All pumps would be screened and filtered prior to release to back to surface waters.

About 1,800 cubic yards of material would be excavated from the new side channel and inlets, and disposed of at an approved waste facility. Wood habitat and bank stabilization treatments would be installed by excavating rock and soil from the streambank, placing the structure, and then backfilling with native soils to anchor structures in place. A mix of upland and riparian planting and seeding would occur along the new side channel and inlets and in the temporary disturbance areas.

After construction, staging and access road materials would be removed. WWBWC would monitor project performance for a minimum of 3 years post-construction to ensure project success. Adaptive management practices such as ongoing vegetation planting and weed control, gravel removal, erosion control measures, and structure maintenance could occur during this time.

**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 Grange July 23, 2020

Katey Grange 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:** Lampson Side Channels Project

## **Project Site Description**

The project area is located in a rural area along the Walla Walla River (River Mile 49), approximately 2.5 miles southeast of Milton-Freewater, Oregon. The project would be located on private property and immediately upstream of the quarter-mile-long perennial side channel and associated inset floodplain installed in 2011. Mature riparian vegetation has been established, providing a buffer between the channel and agriculture use on the property. Recreation in this area has been classified as low to moderate with occasional boaters floating through the area but with poor public access to the project site.

## **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: BPA made a determination of no historic properties affected on September 16, 2019. Oregon State Historic Preservation Office concurred on October 21, 2019. The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation (CTUIR) concurred on September 23, 2019, and the Nez Perce Tribe deferred to CTUIR for consultation.

Notes:

- A cultural resources monitor would be on site during new ground disturbing activities.

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Short-term, temporary increase in soil erosion potential from temporary access road construction, installation of cofferdams, and floodplain excavation. Site restoration measures would provide long-term stability to soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed or special-status plant species are known to exist on the site. Existing riparian vegetation would be selectively removed during construction, and areas disturbed as a result of excavation would be planted with native upland and riparian plant and seed mixes suitable for the project area, resulting in long term benefit to plant communities

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary impacts to local wildlife habitat from noise and vegetation removal expected. ESA-listed species include grey wolf, however they are not known to occupy the project area.

## **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 bull trout, spring Chinook, and summer steelhead. The project is covered under the HIP Biological Opinion under Section 7 of ESA with Project Notification Form number 2020011. The project would result in temporary fish exclusion from low flow refugia within the existing channel, but would result in long-term net benefits to fish species within the project reach from increased habitat availability, and decreased summer stream temperatures.

Clean Water Act removal/fill permits for this project: USACE permit #NWP-2011-127-1, and Oregon Department of State Lands permit #62615-RF.

Umatilla County Zoning Permit 20-072 was issued for floodplain development and stream restoration.

### Notes:

- Project sponsor 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.
- Project sponsor would adhere to all applicable avoidance and minimization efforts identified in the Clean Water Act and Floodplain Development permits issued for this project.

## **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impact to wetlands.

## **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.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would result in about 400 feet of new side channel creation along with adjacent riparian and upland plantings would permanently alter less than one acre of streamside private property from use. The private property owner has entered into an agreement with the project Sponsor, and is supportive of the project.

The Walla Walla River is occasionally used for recreation boating. Public access to the project area is limited and site isolation from the construction site would not impact boats passing through.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor changes to visual quality. Large wood structures would be visually consistent with adjacent vegetation and the topography of the proposed side channels. The project is not located in a visually sensitive area.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in emissions and dust from vehicles accessing the site during construction.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in ambient noise during construction.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work is not considered hazardous nor would result in any health or safety risks to the general public.

### **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: The project Sponsor has been working closely with the private property owner for this project.

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 07/23/2020  
Claire McClory, ECF-4 Date  
Environmental Protection Specialist