

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Lemhi Valley Planting and Invasive Plant Treatment

Project No.: 2010-072-00

Project Manager: Hannah Dondy-Kaplan, EWM-4

Location: Lemhi, 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 the Lemhi Soil and Water Conservation District to revegetate restoration project sites and to treat invasive plants in the Lemhi River valley. These activities fulfil commitments begun under the 2008 NOAA Fisheries Federal Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion (as supplemented in 2010 and 2014) (2008 BiOp) and ongoing commitments under the 2019 NOAA Fisheries Columbia River System BiOp (2019 CRS BiOp).

The project sites to be treated are displayed in the table below (Table 1).

Table 1 Past Restoration Sites Requiring Revegetation

Project Name	Riparian Acres	Upland Acres	Water body	Latitude	Longitude
L8a Fish Screen replacement and new Wellard pipeline	3.7	0	Lemhi River	45.114572	-113.752828
Canyon Creek 02 Fish screen headgate and bypass	2.3	9.7	Canyon Creek	44.697972	-113.330106
Playfair Irrigation	0.2	0	Little Sawmill Creek	44.848874	-113.619940
Little Sawmill Culvert	0.01	0	Little Sawmill Creek	44.848856	-113.620139
Middle Eighteenmile Creek Habitat Improvement	13.21	11.4	Eighteenmile Creek	44.638240	-113.292141
Eighteenmile Bridge at Oxbow	0.04	0	Eighteenmile Creek	44.598098	-113.263520

Revegetation would be accomplished at sites in Table 1 using hydroseeding, seeding, bare-root planting, and planting of containerized plants native and appropriate to riparian and upland habitats in the Lemhi Valley. Bare-root and containerized planting requires the digging of holes (shovels or hand-held augurs) for placement of new plants. Hydro seeding and seeding would apply a seed/mulch slurry, or just seed, on the ground surface with no ground disturbance. A truck-mounted hydro seeder would be used to apply hydroseed slurry.

Invasive plants would be spot-treated in the spring and summer by hand-pulling and backpack spraying of herbicides at 47 sites along various waterbodies in the Lemhi Valley (Table 2). Invasive plant treatments would occur at former restoration project sites or other bare-soil sites

in the Lemhi Valley, and represent locations where individual invasive plants or clusters of such plants, have been found; no broad-scale application of herbicide is proposed. All herbicide applications would be done in accordance with the conservation measures in BPA's Habitat Improvement Program (HIP).

Table 2 Invasive Plant Treatment Sites

Project Site	Stream	Latitude	Longitude
Canyon Creek-02 fish screen, headgate and bypass	Canyon Creek	44.697972	-113.330106
Canyon Creek LCaC-03 pipeline	Canyon Creek	44.700277	-113.312866
Hawley Creek LHaC-01 pipeline	Hawley Creek	44.678311	-113.287297
Hawley Creek Private Bridge	Hawley Creek	44.677869	-113.287165
Hawley Creek LHaC-03 fish screen	Hawley Creek	44.661227	-113.202551
Hawley Creek LHaC-03 pipeline and fields	Hawley Creek	44.660916	-113.202685
Hawley Creek LHaC-02 pipeline	Hawley Creek	44.659152	-113.215891
Hawley LHaC-02 fish screen	Hawley Creek	44.658304	-113.214346
Big Timber-01 fish screen and headgate	Big Timber Creek	44.687486	-113.369893
Carmen Creek 3 fish screen and bypass	Carmen Creek	44.247732	-113.872206
Lee Creek	Lee River	44.742184	-113.478981
L45cd bridge repair	Lemhi River	44.803360	-113.566071
L-10 fish screen, headgate and bypass	Lemhi River	44.10562	-113.73894
L8A fish screen replacement	Lemhi River	44.114572	-113.752828
Eagle Valley	Lemhi River	44.110703	-113.744153
L-61 fish screen, headgate, bypass, and Backroad culvert	Lemhi River	44.715332	-113.40422
Upper Lemhi bank and fence 1	Lemhi River	44.731328	-113.438590
Upper Lemhi bank and fence 2	Lemhi River	44.729579	-113.428591
Lemhi L-60 fish screen	Lemhi River	44.719022	-113.411238
Upper Lemhi bank and fence 3	Lemhi River	44.718669	-113.414107
Upper Lemhi bank and fence 4	Lemhi River	44.713749	-113.407943
Upper Lemhi bank and fence 5	Lemhi River	44.702518	-113.383343
Lemhi L-62 fish screen	Lemhi River	44.702096	-113.380121
L-62A Pump Station	Lemhi River	44.692550	-113.367795
Thor Project	Lemhi River	44.755570	-113.486334
Amonson side channel	Lemhi River	44.769453	-113.513786
Eighteenmile Creek Restoration (Beyeler)	Eighteenmile Creek	44.676624	-113.337942
Eighteenmile Creek Intercept 2	Eighteenmile Creek	44.668581	-113.311529
Middle Eighteenmile Creek Habitat Improvement (Breshears)	Eighteenmile Creek	44.638240	-113.292141
Mabey Lane side channel	Lemhi River	44.941746	-113.641497
Upper Pratt 3 fish pipeline and screen (BLM)	Lemhi River	44.104200	-113.649308
Upper Pratt 2 fish pipeline and screen (private)	Lemhi River	44.097914	-113.653884
Pratt Creek County Bridge	Pratt Creek	44.085738	-113.684097
Pratt Creek (Snook) irrigation pipeline	Pratt Creek	44.081297	-113.689503
Lower Pratt Creek irrigation and fish screen	Pratt Creek	44.079712	-113.704631
Pratt Creek channel restoration	Pratt Creek	44.076006	-113.698583
Sandy Creek culvert replacement	Sandy Creek	44.074827	-113.703324
Pratt-01 fish screen (Snook)	Pratt Creek	44.084703	-113.685107
Wimpey Creek restoration and stockwater	Wimpey Creek	44.100546	-113.71222
Little Sawmill Creek restoration	Little Sawmill Creek	44.848122	-113.620943
Lower Pratt irrigation project (Hedt)	Pratt Creek	44.080557	-113.690651
Pratt Creek Snook stockwater	Pratt Creek	44.078079	-113.699400
Hawley Creek beaver dam analogue habitat restoration	Hawley Creek	44.658470	-113.219390
Beyeler mainstem phase 1 and springs pre-treatment	Lemhi River	44.686872	-113.361709
Playfair irrigation	Little Sawmill Creek	44.848874	-113.619940
Little Sawmill Culvert	Little Sawmill Creek	44.848856	-113.620139
Eighteenmile Bridge at Oxbow Ranch	Eighteenmile Creek	44.598098	-113.263520

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/ Robert W. Shull

Robert W Shull
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
CorSource Technology Group

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: May 21, 2020

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: Lemhi Valley Planting and Invasive Plant Treatment

Project Site Description

The Lemhi River is a tributary to the Salmon River in east-central Idaho. The Lemhi River Valley has been the location of numerous river and stream restoration projects since the early 1990's. These projects are typically located within stream courses, along river banks, and in adjacent riparian, agricultural, or grazing areas along the Lemhi River and its tributaries. These project sites are primarily in riparian areas within agricultural fields or pastures, in a setting that had naturally been sagebrush steppe prior to conversion to agricultural or grazing use. Upon completion, the restoration projects leave a newly shaped and graded bare-soil surface ready for the restoration seeding, plantings, and weed treatments evaluated here.

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"/>

Explanation: Herbicide application does not disturb the ground surface and therefore has no potential for effect to historic or cultural resources.

Restoration plantings would require the digging of holes for containerized or bare-root plants, and have potential for disturbance of historic and cultural resources. Most project sites on which the proposed restoration plantings would occur, however, have had completed cultural surveys and consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Projects requiring consultation were consulted on with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Shoshone Bannock Tribes-Fort Hall Indian Reservation, the Nez Perce Tribe, Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation, and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. The table below describes the results of those consultations for the affected project sites, or the reason for not needing cultural surveys or consultation.

Project site	Survey finds	Eligibility for National Register of Historic Places	Effects determination and SHPO concurrence date
The L8a Fish Screen replacement and new Wellard pipeline	Old State Highway 28, historical irrigation ditches, farm machinery, and structure remnants	Segment of Old State Highway 28 contributes to eligibility; Other finds not eligible, nor information lacking to make determination. No for r	No adverse effect; Dec 19, 2019
Canyon Creek 02	Historic ditch (long since filled in) part of historic homestead site	Eligible historic property	Adverse effect to eligible property (mitigated via a completed Memorandum of Agreement with Idaho State Historic Preservation Office); Mar 17, 2020
Middle Eighteen Mile	Diversion structure and ditch	Not eligible	No historic properties affected; July 1, 2018
Playfair Irrigation	This project site would only be seeded, and therefore has no potential to affect cultural resources		
Little Sawmill Culvert	Old State Highway 28	Eligible	No adverse effect; June 22, 2017
Eighteenmile Bridge at Oxbow	This project site would only be hydro-seeded from established roads, and therefore has no potential to affect cultural resources		

2. **Geology and Soils**



Explanation: This action would occur on sites that would already have been disturbed from the restoration project actions that preceded this planting and weed treatment. All planting is handwork (shovels, or hand-held motorized augers), and minimal additional soil disturbance would occur from digging holes to plant bare-root stock or containerized plants. Minor soil compaction may occur within the hydroseeder's tire tracks by driving off-road to reach treatment areas. No soil displacement or soil mixing would occur from seeding or hydroseeding.

No soil displacement, soil mixing, or other mechanical soil disturbance would occur from herbicide application. Herbicide impacts to biological components of soils would be minimized by application according to manufacturer's labels and further minimized by application of Conservation Measures (timing, amounts/concentrations, location of application, etc.) from BPA's Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation.

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



Explanation: Herbicide applications would take place primarily on sites with slopes less than 20% and HIP conservation measures would be followed to minimize the potential for drift or runoff to non-target vegetation. Though many sites would be in, or near, riparian areas, conservation measures from the BPA's HIP ESA consultation would be applied which would result in little or no potential for herbicide to reach aquatic vegetation.

Plantings and seeding would be on barren sites thus no existing plants would be impacted. These actions would augment native plant communities nearby.

No ESA-listed, or "special status" plant species are present in these locations.

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



Explanation: Planting and weed treatment would be conducted during the spring nesting period, so some short-term (hours) temporary disturbance of nesting birds may occur as a result of human presence and noise from augers or hydroseeder. All planting would be done without damaging existing vegetation, and weed treatments are of herbaceous plants, thus woody plants supporting nesting birds would not be affected. No nest-site destruction would occur.

Disturbance of small terrestrial wildlife would be minimal. Planting sites are mostly barren, with no, or very little small animal habitat present. Weed treatments would be in highly localized spots and thus not substantially impact any one animal's home range. No plants identified for weed treatment are used for habitat purposes by listed species. Larger wildlife using nearby vegetated areas may be disturbed and temporarily displaced by noise and human presence during the short-term planting and weed treatment actions.

Herbicides would be applied according to the HIP conservation measures that would minimize the potential impacts on all native wildlife and wildlife habitats. No ESA-listed or "special-status" wildlife species occupy the planting or weed treatment sites. HIP ESA consultation Project Notification Form presented to Services on 5/11/20.

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



Explanation: Physical impacts to water bodies or floodplains would have already occurred from the initial restoration project's actions. There would be no additional adverse physical changes to water bodies, floodplains, or fish from the manual planting, seeding/hydroseeding, or weed-treatment activities.

Herbicide applications would take place primarily on sites with slopes less than 20% and would use HIP conservation measures to minimize the potential for drift or runoff to aquatic habitats.

There would be biological changes because of the plantings and weed treatments, but these would be beneficial to aquatic and riparian ecosystems and would improve floodplain function.

ESA-listed fish species and critical habitats would be present in nearby waterways, but HIP conservation measures would be applied for revegetation and herbicide applications, thereby preventing

adverse effects. ESA HIP consultation Project Notification Form was submitted to US Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service on 5/11/20.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: Impacts to wetlands would have already occurred from the initial restoration project's actions. There would be no additional adverse impacts to wetlands from this action. All work in wetlands would be handwork (shovels, or hand-held motorized augers); the truck-mounted hydroseeder would not drive in wetlands. Minimal additional wetland disturbance would occur from shovel or auger planting of bare-root stock or containerized plants intended for wetland vegetative restoration.

HIP conservation measures would preclude the application of herbicides near any wetlands by requiring an adequate buffer. Plantings would provide long-term benefits to wetland condition and function.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: The digging of 12- to 18-inch-deep planting holes would be minimal ground disturbance with essentially no effect to groundwater and aquifers.

Herbicide impacts to groundwater and aquifers would be minimized by application according to manufacturer's labels and further minimized by application of Conservation Measures (timing, amounts/concentrations, location of application, etc.) from the HIP ESA consultation.

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

Explanation: Current land uses are agricultural or grazing by the private property owners on whose lands the original restoration project actions were implemented. No land uses were changed by the initial restoration projects, though some practices (e.g. grazing patterns) may have been modified. The resulting land-use practices would not be changed by the follow-up planting and weed treatments planned here.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: The existing condition in planting sites is primarily bare soils, and vegetation planting would restore desired visual characteristics. Visual intrusion by a planting crew or the hydroseeder would be short-term.

The existing condition of weed treatment sites would be varied, as these are small spots where individual plants or clusters of plants have been found. Some sites may be vegetated, some barren; some visible from roads, some not. The killing of these individual plants or small plant clusters may produce unsightly dead plants visible in the foreground in some areas for a season, but would not substantially alter the visual quality.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: Driving of truck-mounted hydroseeder, and use of hand-held motorized augurs for planting would produce emissions, but the amount would be minimal and short-term, and consistent with that produced by local agricultural activities.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: Noise sources would be from truck-mounted hydroseeder, and hand-held augurs for planting. Noise would be consistent with that produced by local agricultural activities and would be short-term. These impacts would occur during daylight hours during the spring and summer months.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: No long-term public safety hazards would be created with this project. Routine, short-term, safety hazards would be expected from the incremental addition of truck traffic on local roads, and the operation of the hydroseeder and hand-held augur. Application of herbicides would be according to manufacturer's labels and the HIP conservation measures, thereby minimizing risk to human health and safety.

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: Plantings and herbicide application on private lands would proceed following notification of the affected land owners. Land owners who authorized the prior restoration project actions on their lands are already aware of, and anticipate, the proposed planting and weed treatments. Spot weed treatments at sites within public road right-of-ways require no site-specific land owner notification.

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

Signed: /s/ Robert W Shull
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Date: May 21, 2020