

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Upper Salmon Basin Habitat and Irrigation Structure Operation and Maintenance

Project No.: 2007-394-00, 2007-268-00, and 2008-603-00

Project Manager: Eric Leitzinger, EWM-4

Location: Lemhi, Custer, and Blaine Counties, 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 Upper Salmon Basin Watershed Program for operation and maintenance activities on project features of completed BPA-funded aquatic, riparian, and upland habitat restoration projects at sites in the table below. All work would occur on private lands within the bounds of previously-completed restoration sites that have been completed within the past four years.

Project	Year	Location (Lat / Long)	Potential Action
Stokes Lower Lemhi Rehabilitation	2016	44.11485 / - 113.76433	planting
Bohannon Crk/Wellard Irrigation	2019	45.11966 / - 113.75151	Irr. diversion mtnce; planting
Bohannon Creek LBC-03 Irrigation Improvement Project	2017	45.11660 / - 113.75720	Irr. diversion mtnce; planting
Pratt Creek Channel Rehabilitation	2018	45.08021 / - 113.69083	Irr. diversion mtnce; planting
Middle Eighteenmile Habitat Improvement	2019	45.17811 / - 113.90266	Irr. diversion mtnce; planting
Upper Pratt Creek Irrigation Improvements	2018	45.10407 / - 113.64937	Irr. diversion mtnce; planting
Hawley Creek Stockwater	2018	44.68415 / - 113.32427	Planting and fence maintenance
Little Sawmill	2018	44.84881 / - 113.61989	Planting and fence mtnce
Big Springs Lemhi Confluence	2018 and 2019	44.72884 / - 113.43455	Planting
Snook Irrigation Improvement Project	2017	45.08556 / - 113.68531	Irr. diversion mtnce; planting, fence mtnce
Eighteenmile Creek Restoration Project	2017	44.67759 / - 113.33776	Irr. diversion mtnce; planting

Project	Year	Location (Lat / Long)	Potential Action
Lemhi Fayle River and Floodplain Restoration	2017	44.69899 / - 113.37285	Planting and fence mtnce
Page Project	2017	44.32549 / - 113.5234	Planting and fence mtnce
Pahsimeroi River Bank Stabilization and Fish Habitat Project	2018	44.32549 / - 113.5238	Planting and fence mtnce

Project actions would include replanting, or additional planting, of native species (seeding, hydroseeding, cuttings, or planting containerized plants) due to plant mortality. Maintenance or part-replacement (in-place and in-kind) of fences, gates, and irrigation infrastructure that was constructed as part of a habitat restoration project within the past four years would also occur. Routine in-stream operation and maintenance activities for constructed irrigation infrastructure, such as clearing accumulated gravel, sediment, and vegetative debris; and irrigation diversion gate repair would also be conducted. All actions proposed would be within the original project's scope and affected area and would not be located in areas identified for avoidance in cultural resource consultations for the original project (no new ground disturbance), and would therefore not require new minimization or avoidance measures to protect cultural resources.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills ongoing commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp) and the 2020 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Columbia River System BiOp (2020 FWS CRS BiOp). Funding these activities also assists Bonneville in mitigating for effects of development and operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System on fish and wildlife in the Columbia River and its tributaries, under the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act of 1980 (the Northwest Power Act) (16 USC § 839b(h)(10)(A)).

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

September 30, 2020

Date

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: Upper Salmon Basin Habitat and Irrigation Structure Operation and Maintenance

Project Site Description

The previously completed-project sites are located mostly in agricultural, pasture, or grazing lands in riparian and floodplain bottoms along the Lemhi River and its tributaries in east-central Idaho. The project sites are primarily in broad riparian floodplains within a sagebrush steppe ecosystem, and at locations where much of the floodplain and surrounding productive sagebrush steppe lands have been converted to agricultural and grazing uses supported by irrigation diversions from these rivers/creeks.

The sites are on soils previously disturbed by prior completed restoration project actions, and are in various stages of recovery from that previous disturbance. The sites would have been graded or reshaped by the restoration project and revegetated by seeding, hydroseeding or with recently planted native shrubs or trees scattered throughout. All structures being maintained would be new within the past four years.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All activities would occur on sites that have been surveyed for cultural resources and have been included as part of Section 106 consultations with Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, affected Indian Tribes, and other interested parties. A BPA/BPA contract archaeologist has reviewed these proposed actions to confirm that previous Section 106 compliance is appropriate and sufficient, that project actions would not compromise minimization or avoidance measures from original consultation, and that the proposed actions do not require additional minimization or avoidance measures. See Attachment 1 that describes previous consultations and avoidance/minimization measures.

Most actions (e.g., fencing, plantings, and structure operations and maintenance) would not disturb soils and would thus have no potential to disturb cultural resources. There may be some small areas of soil disturbance from the planting of containerized plants, but the plantings would be replacing prior plantings that did not survive and would thus be in the same location or adjacent, and in locations surveyed and consulted on under previous NHPA Section 106.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Most actions (e.g., fencing, plantings, and structure operations and maintenance) would not disturb soils and would thus have no potential to disturb geology and soils. There may be some small areas of soil disturbance from the planting of containerized plants, but impacts to soils from these plantings would be low.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status plant species or habitats have been identified in any Upper Salmon Basin habitat projects. None are present within the project sites.

Native plants would not be removed or destroyed since previously undisturbed soils would not be impacted. Fence and irrigation structure operations and maintenance would not disturb plants beyond minimal trampling by workers.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status wildlife species or habitats occupy the project sites nor have any been identified in any Upper Salmon Basin habitat projects. No habitats would be modified. Human presence and activity associated with these actions would temporarily disturb and displace nearby wildlife, but there would be no long-term displacement resulting in competition for nearby habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed plantings and fence and irrigation infrastructure operations and maintenance actions would not physically alter any aquatic habitat or floodplain, thus, there would be no adverse physical changes to water bodies, floodplains, or fish from these actions.

ESA-listed fish species (Chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout) use the waterways along which these actions would occur. Consultation under ESA for the protection of these species has been completed for the original actions, and the protective measures from those consultations would apply to these follow-up actions. Routine in-stream operations and maintenance actions of constructed irrigation structures could disturb and displace fish temporarily from the work site, but no in-stream habitat would be modified or impacted.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No heavy equipment would be used, and no action would modify wetland structure, thus wetland hydrology, soils and plant communities would not be modified or heavily impacted. Planting of containerized plants in riparian wetlands may impact small spots within a wetland, but the number of plantings or replanting would be low and would not change the existing wetland plant community.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no groundwater withdrawal. There would be no potential for contamination of groundwater from fuel or fluid drips or spills since no heavy equipment is being used.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No action would change the capability of the land to be used as it was prior to project actions. There would be no land use changes, and no impact to specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No prominent vegetative, landform, or structural change would be made. All actions would result in native species growing in natural-appearing habitat conditions, or agriculture-associated structures and fences within an agricultural setting.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be some short-term potential for exhaust and greenhouse gas emissions since motor vehicles would be used to access the work sites, but the effects on air quality would be minimal and of short-term.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The only noise source would be from humans working on the site, the use of hand tools, and the use of vehicles to transport workers, supplies, and equipment. Any effects from noise would be minimal and of short-term.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Vehicle operation and working with hand and power tools have their attendant risk to users, but there would be no condition created from these actions that would introduce new human health or safety hazards or risk into the environment. No condition created by these actions would increase the burden on the local health, safety, and emergency-response infrastructure. Neither project actions nor operation of project-associated vehicles on public roads would hinder traffic or access by emergency vehicles.

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: Most projects would be on private lands where the private land owner had worked closely with the project sponsors in design and implementation of the original habitat restoration projects. Maintenance and adaptive modifications of completed projects would proceed following notification of the affected land owners.

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

Robert W. Shull, ECF-4
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
CorSource Technology Group

September 30, 2020

date

Attachment 1: Past NHPA Section 106 consultation dates and applicable avoidance or minimization measures.

Project	Section 106 consultation completion date	Avoidance or minimization measures identified in original project consultation
Stokes Lower Lemhi Rehabilitation	7/1/15	None
Bohannon Crk/Wellard Irrigation	12/19/19	Site EVR-2 was avoided by flagging a 10-meter buffer, thus no features or plantings would be present at these sites to be maintained in this action. No minimization measures identified in consultation. No additional minimization or avoidance measures required.
Bohannon Creek LBC-03 Irrigation Improvement Project	9/16/17	None
Pratt Creek Channel Rehab	5/2/18	None by BPA consultation; In Army Corps of Eng consultation Sites PC-1 and PC-2 were avoided by project design, thus no features or plantings would be present at these sites to be maintained in this action. No minimization measures identified in consultation. No additional minimization or avoidance measures required.
Middle Eighteenmile Crk Habitat Improvement Project	7/1/18	None
Upper Pratt Creek Irrigation Improvements	9/7/17 (and 10/2/18 for expanded area)	None
Hawley Creek Stockwater	7/1/18	Sites HS-3 and HS-4 were avoided by project design, thus no features or plantings would be present at these sites to be maintained in this action. No minimization measures identified in consultation. No additional minimization or avoidance measures required.
Little Sawmill	6/22/17	None
Big Springs Lemhi Confluence	7/17/18	Sites LBSC-1 and 59-17203 were avoided by project design, thus no features or plantings would be present at these sites to be maintained in this action. No minimization measures identified in consultation. No additional minimization or avoidance measures required.
Snook Irrigation Improvement Project	4/20/15 and 11/30/16	None
Eighteenmile Creek Restoration Project	4/22/17	None
Lemhi Fayle River and Floodplain Restoration	6/21/17	None
Page Project	6/20/18	None
Pahsimeroi River Bank Stabilization and Fish Habitat Project	7/13/18	None