

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Chahalpam Chub Pond Project

**Project No.:** 2009-012-00

**Project Manager:** Eric Andersen, EWL - 4

**Location:** Marion County, OR

**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 Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde to implement a channel restoration project along the North Santiam River, in Marion County, OR. The project aims to reconnect the mainstem North Santiam River to the inlet of an historical off-channel slough (Chahalpam Pond) to increase floodplain function and connectivity. The Chahalpam Pond has been monitored for Oregon chub by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife since 1995 and is identified in the Recovery Plan for Oregon chub (Gray Slough).

Proposed actions include lowering the side channel inlet to increase flow into the side channel, removing cobble fill in the side channel that was used for a relict road crossing, lowering 380 feet of the side channel from the inlet to below the relict road crossing to increase channel capacity, placing large wood at the side channel inlet to promote flow into the side channel, placing large wood in the side channel to increase habitat complexity, placing large wood in an earthen berm on the north side of the pond to increase habitat complexity, and spoiling floodplain gravels in an agricultural field that would be restored to a riparian forest. Approximately 18 large wood structures would be placed on the margin of the chub pond and inlet channel. Following construction, all work areas would be graded to match adjacent undisturbed surfaces and a site appropriate (i.e., upland, wetland, riparian) seed mix would be broadcast on disturbed surfaces.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills commitments under the 2008 National Marine Fisheries Service Willamette River Biological Opinion, while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the FCRPS on fish and wildlife in the mainstem Columbia River and its tributaries pursuant to the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act of 1980 (Northwest Power Act) (16 U.S.C. (USC) 839 et seq.).

**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                      June 1, 2022

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:** Chahalpam Chub Pond Project

## **Project Site Description**

The project is located on Chahalpam, a 462-acre conservation parcel located near Stayton, OR along the North Santiam River. The property contains portions of floodplain forests along both banks of the river and the property encompasses more than a mile of river frontage. The project site consists of 10 acres; 8 acres of riparian area that surround the 2-acre Chahalpam Pond. The Chahalpam Pond is an historical off-channel habitat that is important for Oregon chub and other native aquatic species. Only a small area remains wetted throughout the year and dry river bed exists on the inlet. It is estimated that the pond inlet connects with the river at less than a 2-year flood interval.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA made a determination of no historic properties affected on April 20, 2022 (OR 2022 073). BPA consulted with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. Concurrence was received from the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (May 10, 2022). BPA did not receive concurrence from any other consulting parties within 30 days.

Notes:

- 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.

### **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 best management practices (BMPs) would be installed prior to project implementation to minimize potential for in-stream turbidity or excessive runoff during construction. Excavated sediments would be loaded into a truck and outhauled to an upland spoil area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no known Federal/state special-status plant species in the project area. 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

Explanation: There are no known Federal/state special-status wildlife species in the project area. Minor, short-term disturbance would occur to wildlife species in the area from noise associated with construction. The goal of the work is to improve riparian and floodplain habitat for the benefit of terrestrial and aquatic species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No known state-listed special-status species present. Impacts to ESA-listed species (Upper Willamette River Chinook salmon and steelhead) would be covered under BPA's programmatic Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) biological opinion with the USFWS and NMFS. A turbidity curtain would be placed in the primary side channel that would have flow in the channel during construction. 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.

#### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Wood placement in wetland habitats would have small footprints to minimize wetland impacts and equipment would be positioned in uplands. There would be a long-term benefit by restoring the project area to a more natural condition.

#### **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions would have no long-term impact to groundwater or aquifers. If excavation intercepts groundwater, a straw bale filter dam would be placed at the downstream end of the side channel grading area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions would not impact or change land use.

#### **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some changes in vegetation and the associated visual quality would occur in the immediate project area, but the changes would be returning the area to a more natural state and would be consistent with the visual quality of the surrounding area. There would be a long-term improvement in the visual quality of the area due to the restoration of a more native plant and animal habitat condition.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, short-term impact to air quality from vehicle emissions and dust generated by equipment use.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, short-term increase in ambient noise during use of vehicles and equipment.

## 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: The entire project area is owned and managed by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. The project would not occur on any land owned by additional landowners. Adjacent land upstream and downstream of the project site is owned by the Tribe.

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 June 1, 2022  
Shawn Skinner, ECF-4 Date  
Environmental Protection Specialist