

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Jefferson Farms Conservation Easement Acquisition and Stewardship Funding

Project No.: 2011-003-00; BPA-012397

Project Manager: Tori Bohlen – EWU-4

Location: Lane County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.25 Real property transfers for cultural resources protection, habitat preservation, and wildlife management

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA is proposing to fund the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) to purchase a conservation easement over a property referred to as Jefferson Farms, which is an approximately 227-acre parcel of land located about 4 miles north from Jefferson in Marion County, Oregon. FWS would hold the conservation easement and BPA would have third party rights of enforcement to permanently preserve and protect, and where appropriate allow for restoration or enhancement of identified conservation values. BPA would also provide stewardship funds toward maintenance, monitoring, and enforcement of the conservation easement to FWS.

This conservation easement purchase would partially fulfill BPA's obligations under the Northwest Power Act to protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitat, and would specifically satisfy some of BPA's commitments made in the 2010 "Willamette River Basin Memorandum of Agreement Regarding Wildlife Habitat Protection and Enhancement between the State of Oregon and the Bonneville Power Administration."

The property features important native habitats and species, including but not limited to Oregon white oak-dominated habitats and three Endangered Species Act-listed plant species, and ecological connectivity to a larger conservation area that the FWS has determined to be suitable for inclusion in the Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge. The FWS has drafted a land management plan to guide the protection and enhancement of habitat and other resources on the property, which would be completed by closing after review and approval by BPA for consistency with the conservation easement and the purpose of the acquisition. If BPA proposes to fund any additional, future habitat restoration activities on the property, further environmental review may be conducted.

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/ Israel Duran
Israel Duran
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

<u>/s/ Sarah T. Biegel</u>	<u>July 11, 2022</u>
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: Jefferson Farms Conservation Easement Acquisition and Stewardship Funding

Project Site Description

The approximately 227-acre property is located about 4 miles north of Jefferson, in Marion County, Oregon, and currently consists of approximately 196 acres of upland prairie/Oregon white oak savannah/Oregon white oak woodland matrix, 22 acres of agricultural fields, and a 9-acre water storage reservoir. Approximately 80% of the property has already been restored with the exception of the farm fields and reservoir. The farm fields are planned for restoration after the current agricultural lease ends in 2044 at the latest, using non-BPA funds. The irrigation reservoir is part of the grantor's reserved water rights for farming on another parcel and would not be managed, enhanced, or restored as part of the conservation easement. The property features important native habitats and species, including but not limited to the Oregon white oak habitats mentioned above; three Endangered Species Act-listed plant species (Nelson's checker-mallow, golden paintbrush, and Willamette Valley daisy) and at least twelve avian Oregon Conservation Strategy focal species (including western meadowlark, western bluebird, Lewis woodpecker, acorn woodpecker, and slender-billed nuthatch) and other important species; and ecological connectivity to a larger conservation area that the FWS has determined to be suitable for inclusion in the Ankeny National Wildlife Refuge.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no effect due to the conservation easement acquisition. To the extent that future activities on the property may have an effect, it is expected that the FWS would comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

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: Notification letters would be sent to adjacent landowners and other interested parties at a minimum of 15 days before the closing date (proposed closing date is September 30, 2022) of the sale. Advertisements would also be posted in local newspapers, and information would be posted on BPA's public website prior to closing.

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

Signed: /s/ Israel Duran July 11, 2022
Israel Duran, ECF-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist