

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Road Creek Bridge Construction

**Project No.:** 2007-268-00

**Project Manager:** Tim Ludington, EWM-4

**Location:** Custer County, 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 Custer County Soil and Water Conservation District to replace an undersized culvert with a bridge across Road Creek, which is a small tributary of the East Fork Salmon River, at Latitude 44.186914, Longitude -114.287567. The existing culvert clogs during high flows, overtops, and washes out the East Fork Salmon River Road. It is also a barrier to passage of Endangered Species Act-listed Snake River spring/summer Chinook salmon, Snake River steelhead, and bull trout. The existing culvert would be replaced with a 40-foot long, 26-foot wide steel bridge with concrete deck.

Road Creek would remain in its current alignment (a course redirected from the stream's historical alignment) and flow through the existing culvert during construction of a new stream course (along its historical alignment) and bridge approximately 40 feet up the road. The project would be completed using a metal-tracked excavator (CAT 320 or similar) operating with support equipment (loader or skid steer), dewatering pumps, and human labor.

After construction, Road Creek would be directed into its original but now reconstructed historical channel immediately above the new bridge, and the former channel would be filled. All disturbed surfaces would be replanted with native seed and live plants. Inspection and maintenance of the project site would occur annually, and could include minor on-site adjustments to streambank or channel bed conditions within, above, and below the new bridge as needed to maintain project success, and additional vegetation plantings if needed.

This Proposed Action fulfills commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Columbia River System Biological Opinion and would support conservation of Endangered Species Act-listed species considered in the 2020 Endangered Species Act consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on the operation and maintenance of the Columbia River System.

**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:

<u>/s/ Sarah T. Biegel</u>	<u>March 9, 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:** Road Creek Bridge Construction

### **Project Site Description**

Project actions would be located along the East Fork Salmon River Road just above the confluence of Road Creek and the East Fork Salmon River. Native vegetation consists primarily of grasses, sedges, cottonwoods, and willows in the riparian areas within the project site, with bunchgrass and sagebrush in the sagebrush steppe upslope of the bridge site. A private residence and ranch/farm work center is located below the East Fork Salmon River Road below the new bridge location. An irrigation ditch parallels the road immediately below the bridge site. Land use in the area is primarily agriculture (alfalfa and grass hay production).

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On December 23, 2021, BPA initiated consultation with the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Reservation, Shoshone Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation, Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation, Nez Perce Tribe, and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for the Road Creek Bridge Project (BPA CR Project No. ID 2021 057; SHPO Rev. No. 2022-224). BPA provided an inventory report by Sundance Consulting, Inc. that documented one newly identified resource (a historic ditch, Temp. No. SEF-01), and one previously identified resource (10CR6) that could not be relocated during the intensive survey and subsurface soil testing.

On January 20, 2022, SHPO concurred with BPA's determination that the implementation of the proposed undertaking would result in no adverse effect to historic properties. BPA did not receive any other responses from consulting parties. In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA would require that work be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA and in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

#### **2. Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be temporary displacement and compaction impacts to soil from the operation of heavy equipment needed for this action, and an increased erosion potential during construction activities. Sediment control BMPs would be installed prior to project implementation to minimize potential for in-stream turbidity or excessive runoff during construction. The entire work area would be contoured appropriate to the surrounding floodplain following construction, hydroseeded, and planted with native riparian species to facilitate soil recovery.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status plants, including Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed species, are present. There would be temporary impacts to existing vegetation during construction activities. Post construction plantings and long-term monitoring would re-establish native riparian plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status wildlife species or habitats are within the project site. No habitats would be modified to any degree that might permanently displace resident wildlife, though some may be temporarily displaced by disturbance from construction activities. Human presence and activity associated with construction would temporarily disturb and displace nearby wildlife, but long-term displacement resulting in competition for nearby habitats is unlikely.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed Snake River spring/summer Chinook salmon, Snake River steelhead, and bull trout are present in the project area. The project was reviewed and consulted on under the HIP Biological Opinion under Section 7 of the ESA. The 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. No state-listed special-status species occupy the project area. The new bridge and stream course would be constructed primarily "in the dry" with no disturbance to fish or fish habitat until completion when the stream would be rereouted into its reconstructed historical channel. HIP conservation measures would be followed to herd fish downstream from the former channel as it slowly dewater.

Some aquatic invertebrates and amphibians may be displaced or killed by mechanical activities at the site where the stream would be redirected into its new channel, but quick re-occupation of this small site by the same or other members of the same classes of animals following construction is anticipated.

A Clean Water Act Nationwide Permit 27 (NWS-2020-724) was obtained to ensure the project meets national water quality standards.

### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present in the project area. There would be no effect.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no groundwater withdrawal. There would be some miniscule potential for contamination of groundwater from fuel or fluid drips or spills from the equipment used

for culvert replacement, but spills and drips with the volume necessary to contaminate groundwater is unlikely.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not 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 visually-prominent vegetative, landform, or structural change would be made. Culvert replacement would not change the visual character of the landscape along, or as seen from, local roads.

## **10. Air Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be some exhaust and greenhouse gas emissions from the motorized equipment used for bridge construction, but these are short-term actions, and no long-term source of emissions or exhaust would be created. Vehicles used to transport workers, supplies, and equipment to the site would be another potential source of exhaust and greenhouse gasses, but this also would be minimal and short term.

## **11. Noise**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be some short-term noise impacts from the heavy equipment used for bridge construction, but this type of noise is not inconsistent with that of common ranching and haying operations in the local area.

## **12. Human Health and Safety**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Vehicle and excavator operation, and working with hand and power tools have their attendant risks to equipment operators, but there would be no condition created from this action that would introduce new human health or safety hazards or risk into the environment. No condition created by this action would increase the burden on the local health, safety, and emergency-response infrastructure.

### **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**

Explanation: The actions proposed have been planned in cooperation with the county road department and the private land owner, whose residence is nearby. The action would proceed following notification of the affected land owner who authorized the restoration project actions and would participate in the proposed fencing and restoration planting.

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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March 9, 2022

Date