

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Crystal Summit Conservation Easement Acquisition and Stewardship Funding

**Project No.:** 1995-057-00; BPA-011330

**Project Manager:** Sandra Fife, EWM-4

**Location:** Power County, ID

**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:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is proposing to fund the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) to purchase a conservation easement on the Crystal Summit property, a 1,250-acre parcel of land located 15 miles south of Pocatello, ID, in Power County, ID. IDFG would hold a conservation easement to permanently protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitat. BPA would also provide stewardship funds toward protection, preservation, and enhancement of its conservation values under the terms and conditions of the 2014 Southern Idaho Wildlife Mitigation Memorandum of Agreement between the State of Idaho and Bonneville Power Administration (SIWM MOA).

Funding the purchase of the conservation easement and long-term stewardship would serve as partial mitigation for the construction and operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System which includes dams on the main stem Columbia and Snake Rivers. This land purchase would specifically satisfy some of BPA's commitments made in the SIWM MOA.

The property consists of upland habitat comprised of a diverse, multi-species shrub component and native grass/forb understory, as well as riparian habitat comprised of wetlands, ponds, and high quality aspen stands. The primary purpose of the conservation easement is to protect mule deer and elk summer range and a substantial migration and transition area for both species. These lands also support sharp-tailed grouse and moose populations. Prior to purchase of the conservation easement, IDFG would develop a management plan to guide the protection and enhancement of habitat and other resources on the property. The management plan would be reviewed by BPA for consistency with the purpose of the conservation easement. If BPA proposes to fund any additional 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/ Mandy Hope

Mandy Hope  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
ACS Professional Staffing

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel  
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey Grange  
NEPA Compliance Officer

August 4, 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.

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## **Project Site Description**

The property vicinity includes a mix of US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management lands, as well as agricultural properties consisting mostly of dry farm fields. The property itself is similarly comprised of forested areas (mostly on the higher northern end) and dry farm fields. It is situated in an agricultural area of Power County. Elevations on the property range from a low of approximately 5,300 feet at the southwest corner of the property to a high of approximately 6,260 feet on the topographic knob in the northern part of the property. Terrain on most of the property is rolling, and steeper slopes are mostly associated with mountain ridges in the northern portion of the property or eroded swales in the lower elevation dry farmed portion of the property.

## **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 IDFG 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: A public notification letter and map of the property would be mailed to neighboring landowners, stakeholders, and relevant elected officials and other interested parties prior to the property closing. Advertisements would also be placed in local newspapers, and information would be posted on BPA's website.

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

Signed: /s/ Mandy Hope 08/04/2020  
Mandy Hope, ECF-4 Date  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
ACS Professional Staffing