

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Elochoman River Bend Land Acquisition

Project No.: 2010-073-00

Project Manager: Anne Creason, EWL-4

Location: Wahkiakum, Washington

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 provide funding to the Columbia Land Trust for the purchase of a 6 acre property located near Cathlamet in Wahkiakum County, Washington. BPA would hold a conservation easement to permanently protect, mitigate and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitat. BPA would provide stewardship funds toward maintenance of the property to the landowner, Columbia Land Trust.

The funding would be provided as part of BPA's ongoing efforts to protect, restore and enhance habitat for threatened and endangered salmon and steelhead. The acquisition would support efforts to mitigate for the effects of development and operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System on fish and wildlife in the mainstem Columbia River and its tributaries under the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act of 1980 in a manner consistent with the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's Fish and Wildlife Program.

This land purchase would specifically satisfy some of BPA's Columbia River estuary mitigation commitments begun under the 2008 NOAA Fisheries Federal Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion (as supplemented in 2010 and 2014) (2008 BiOp) and ongoing commitments under the 2019 NOAA Fisheries Columbia River System BiOp (2019 CRS BiOp). The 2008 BiOp called for identifying estuary habitat restoration projects and the 2019 CRS BiOp largely continues the estuary habitat restoration program.

The property consists of riparian and floodplain habitat within the Lower Elochoman River that will benefit all species of juvenile salmon and steelhead. The Columbia Land Trust 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 conservation easement and the purpose of the acquisition. 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/ Travis Kessler

Travis Kessler
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient CRGT, Inc.

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange 06/23/2020

Katey C. Grange
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: Elochoman River Bend Land Acquisition

Project Site Description

The Elochoman River Bend Land Acquisition consists of a 6 acre property that is privately owned and BPA would fund its purchase by Columbia Land Trust at closing. The property includes riparian and floodplain habitat that benefit all species of juvenile salmon and steelhead. The property is located near Cathlamet in Wahkiakum County, Washington.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: There would be no effect due to the land acquisition, which includes transfer of title and the creation of a conservation easement. To the extent that future activities on the property may have an effect, it is expected that the Columbia Land Trust 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: See explanation for #1 above.

Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

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: See explanation for #1 above.

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: See explanation for #1 above.

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: Notification letters will be sent to adjacent landowners and other interested parties at a minimum of 15 days before the closing date of the sale. Ads will also be posted in local newspapers, and information will 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/Travis Kessler, ECF-4 06/23/2020
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient CRGT, Inc.