

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Klein Floodplain Activation Project

Project No.: 207-224-00

Project Manager: Joe Connor

Location: Okanogan County, WA

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: BPA is proposing to fund the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation for the Klein Floodplain Activation Project, which would create two side channels on the river right bank of the Similkameen River. One side channel would be approximately 300 feet long and the second side channel would be approximately 200 feet long. Both would be approximately 15 feet wide. These side channels would enhance floodplain connectivity and provide off-channel rearing habitat with increased habitat complexity for juvenile salmonids. They would become seasonally inundated with the onset of the spring freshet, which roughly coincides with the period of juvenile emigration, and would become dewatered as flows in the Similkameen River recede such that they cannot support nonnative predators (primarily smallmouth bass) throughout the year. Additionally, a 10-foot culvert would be installed at an existing access road.

Activation of disconnected rearing swales involves excavation of foreign material fill at the interface of the side channels and Similkameen River. A total of 5,000 cubic yards of material would be excavated. Sediment control would be installed before staging of heavy equipment. Excavation would be isolated from the wetted channel using super sacks to de-water, if necessary. Excavation equipment includes large scale excavators, D-series bull dozers, bobcats, and dump trucks; excavators and bulldozers would be using total station grade control for removal and grading to engineered specifications. All of the excavated material would be deposited on site, graded to match site conditions, and revegetated with native upland vegetation. Removal of equipment includes decompaction and reseeding of installed portions of access road, native plant salvage, seeding, and cuttings installation. Turbidity measurement of mainstem conditions would be taken during construction and activation as required.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills ongoing commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp, and Bonneville's commitments to the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation under the 2020 Columbia River Fish Accord Extension agreement, 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/ Ted Gresh

Ted Gresh

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

October 22, 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.

Proposed Action: Klein Floodplain Activation Project

Project Site Description

Vegetation in the project area consists of mature cottonwood and hawthorn thickets and is crisscrossed with cattle trails. Pasture area is struggling scrub woody stems, pressured by livestock as well as seasonal inundation. Large open space is a mixture of native and non-native grass and forb, knapweed, Russian thistle, Scotch thistle, and Russian olive.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA made a determination of no historic properties affected on October 1, 2020. Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation concurred on October 2, 2020.

Notes:

- A cultural resources monitor would be on site during new ground-disturbing activities.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Short-term, temporary increase in soil erosion potential from temporary access road construction, installation of cofferdams, and 5,000 CY of floodplain excavation. Site restoration measures would provide long-term stability to soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed or special-status plant species are known to exist on the site. Existing riparian vegetation would be selectively removed during construction, and areas disturbed as a result of excavation would be planted with native upland and riparian plant and seed mixes suitable for the project area, resulting in long-term benefit to plant communities

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary impacts to local wildlife habitat from noise and vegetation removal expected. ESA-listed species are not known to occupy the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No known state-listed, special-status species present. The only ESA-listed fish species in the project area is Upper Columbia steelhead. The project is covered under the HIP Biological Opinion under Section 7 of ESA with Project Notification Form number 2020093. The project would result in long-term net benefits to fish species within the project reach from increased habitat availability, and decreased summer stream temperatures. There would be no net change in the floodplain capacity of the site because all excavated material would be deposited on site and regraded/replanted.

Invasive species, such as smallmouth bass, are present in the Similkameen River and project design was completed to reduce creation of additional habitat for invasive species that otherwise would result in a potential increase for competition with native fish. Clean Water Act removal/fill permits for this project: USACE permit #NWP-2011-127-1, and Oregon Department of State Lands permit #62615-RF.

Notes:

- 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.
- Project sponsor would adhere to all applicable avoidance and minimization efforts identified in the Clean Water Act and Floodplain Development permits issued for this project.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no permanent adverse impacts to wetlands as a part of this project. The project would be following the BPA HIP guidelines and BMPs to protect and avoid impacts to existing wetlands. A Nationwide Permit 27 (NWS-2020-477) was obtained and all permit conditions would be followed. Because this project is a habitat restoration and enhancement project, no net loss to wetlands or wetland buffers would result from this project. This project would increase the frequency and duration of hydrologic connectivity with the floodplain and is anticipated to result in an increase in aquatic resource functions.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Although there would be ground disturbance as a result of the excavation of the proposed side channels, the work is not expected to have a substantial effect on groundwater and aquifers. The side channel project would have a positive effect on groundwater recharge function and water quality once the new hydrologic inputs are able to spread across the floodplain and raise the water table, creating new wetlands and aquatic habitat.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use would occur for the proposed project. The area where grazing occurs would be outside the project area and remain available.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would have little to no effect on visual quality. The new side channel would be visually consistent with adjacent vegetation and topography. Any change to the viewshed due to construction vehicles or equipment would be short term and temporary.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A temporary increase in emissions and dust from vehicles accessing the field site would be very minor and short term during construction, but would resume to normal conditions immediately once the project is completed.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would result in a small temporary increase in ambient noise. Any noise emitted from construction equipment would be short term and temporary during daylight hours and would cease following project completion.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work is not considered hazardous nor does it result in any health or safety risks to the general public. There would be no soil contamination or hazardous conditions and no CERCLA sites.

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 landowner is the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). BOR has been involved in the EC process and is issuing an access permit to the Colville Tribe and is supportive of the project.

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

Signed: /s/ Ted Gresh October 22, 2020
Ted Gresh, ECF-4 date
Environmental Protection Specialist