

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Chewuch River and Nason Creek Pump Test/Piezometer Installation

Project No.: 2009-003-00

Project Manager: Tori Bohlen, EWU-4

Location: Chelan County and Okanogan County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B3.1 Site characterization and environmental monitoring

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Yakama Nation (YN) to contract the excavation of three pump test pits and the installation of up to 13 piezometer wells along the alignment of proposed channels at Chewuch River and Nason Creek in central Washington in order to gather information about the soil profile and groundwater elevation, which would inform the design of potential habitat restoration projects.

Funding the proposed activities would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with both NMFS and USFWS on the O&M of the Columbia River System while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System (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.).

The proposed action would occur at two potential restoration sites:

1. Nason Creek (Chelan County, WA): Two pump test pits would be dug and up to four wells would be installed at four locations along the creek.
2. Chewuch River (Okanogan County, WA): One pump test pit would be dug and nine wells would be installed at nine locations along the river.

Pump test pits would measure approximately 10 feet by 20 feet, with a maximum depth of five to eight feet. Wells would be composed of three- to six-inch-diameter PVC pipe with a capped glued bottom and a threaded cap for the top and would be placed at a depth of up to six feet. A rubber tracked excavator would be used to dig the test pits and wells. Large mats of topsoil would be set aside during excavation to be used as backfill upon project completion. The wells would be cut to three to four feet above ground level. Sites would be reached using existing access roads as far as possible, followed by driving over brush and around trees to the test sites. Vehicles would be parked off of the roadway on a pull-out at the Nason Creek site, and on private property at the Chewuch River site. The work would take four days to complete. Equipment and materials would be stored offsite when not in use.

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

Both project sites are located in north-central Washington. The Nason Creek project area is located on US Forest Service (USFS)-managed land in the Wenatchee National Forest in Chelan County, WA, within T26N, R17E, Section 9, approximately 11.5 miles north-northwest of Leavenworth, at an elevation of about 2,000 feet. The Chewuch River project area is located in Okanogan County, WA, within T35N, R21E, Section 23, approximately 2.5 miles north of Winthrop, at an elevation of about 1,900 feet.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The USFS is the lead federal agency for Section 106 compliance under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) for the actions planned to occur at Nason Creek. Consultation with the YN and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CCT) occurred on 10/30/19. Concurrence was received on 12/11/19. Concurrence was received from the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) on 9/24/20. BPA sent a letter to consulting parties on 10/1/20 to inform them of BPA's funding role. No response was required.

BPA initiated Section 106 consultation with the YN, CCT, DAHP, and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) for the actions planned to occur at Chewuch River on 8/22/19. DAHP and CCT concurrence were received on 8/22/19 and 8/28/19, respectively. No comments were received from the remaining consulting parties; therefore, BPA assumed concurrence with our effects determination.

Notes:

- An archaeological monitor from the Yakama Nation would be present during piezometer well installation.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Soil would be displaced during pit excavation. The depth of soil disturbance would not exceed eight feet. The pits would be backfilled following well installation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed plant species in either project area. Plants in the immediate vicinity of each project area would be subject to short-term

impacts as a result of trampling by vehicles used to reach the project sites. This would not be expected to have long-term impacts to plant communities. At the completion of the pump tests, each test pit and pump test location would be filled and contoured to pre-existing conditions. To reduce impacts to plant species, large mats of topsoil would be set aside during excavation. These mats would be placed on top of the backfilled material following installation of the piezometer wells. Vegetation that had been stripped during project implementation would be sorted for native and non-native materials. Non-native materials would be placed into the holes first, while native vegetation would be buried on top.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: ESA-listed Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*), marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*), northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) and its critical habitat, and yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) have the potential to occur in the project areas. Any potential impacts to ESA-listed species at the Nason Creek project site would be minimized by following the measures outlined in the USFS's ESA Section 7 consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for Aquatic Restoration Activities in the States of Oregon, Washington and portions of California, Idaho and Nevada (collectively known as ARBO II). Any impacts to both listed and non-listed wildlife species at the Chewuch River project site would be limited to the immediate project area, where there would be a temporary, small decrease in available habitat and temporary elevated noise disturbance.

Notes:

- The YN and its contractor would adhere to all design features described in the USFS's ESA Section 7 ARBO II consultation to minimize impacts to ESA-listed species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Both Nason Creek and Chewuch River contain ESA-listed bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) and steelhead (*O. mykiss*) and their critical habitat; however, the channels are dry during the time period when work is proposed (late October) and there would be no impact to fish species.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Wetlands are not present in the project areas. The proposed action would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Piezometer wells would be installed to a depth of six feet in order to measure groundwater levels. Water would not be withdrawn or diverted from the system.

Notes:

- Spill prevention measures would be present on site to prevent groundwater contamination.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Land use would not change as a result of the proposed action.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Visual quality would not change as a result of the proposed action.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary generation of emissions associated with the use of excavation equipment onsite would occur.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary noise increases associated with vehicles and excavation equipment would occur.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All personnel would use best management practices to protect worker health and safety.

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 Nason Creek project area is owned and managed by the USFS, which is actively involved with the planning of the proposed action. The Chewuch River site is located on both WDFW land and private property. The test pits/wells would occur on state land and would be accessed via private property. Adjacent landowners are contacted directly by the YN as part of project outreach.

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 October 22, 2020
Mandy Hope, ECF-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
ACS Professional Staffing