

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Wapato Lake Unit Vegetation Management

Project No.: 2000-016-00

Project Manager: Siena Lopez-Johnston, EWM-4

Location: Washington County, Oregon

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 funding the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to conduct vegetation management activities in the Wapato National Wildlife Refuge's Wapato Lake Unit in Washington and Yamhill counties. The proposed actions would cover approximately 1,000 acres and include vegetation control by mechanical or chemical treatments and planting. Nonnative seed banks would be exhausted by using mechanical means such as mowing, discing and the spot application of approved herbicides via backpack sprayer or booms mounted to ATVs and tractors. Planting actions would begin after site preparation and includes seeding of native grass and forbs and hand planting shrubs and trees. Activities would commence during early 2021 and continue through fall 2021.

These actions would support the 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/ Israel Duran

Israel Duran
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient/CRGT

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange April 28, 2021

Katey C. Grange 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: – Wapato Lake Unit Vegetation Management

Project Site Description

Activities would occur within the Wapato Lake Unit of the Wapato National Wildlife Refuge, which is currently owned and/or managed by the USFWS. Located on the outskirts of Portland, the Wapato Lake Unit is 4,370 acres in total and is located near the city of Gaston along Oregon Route 47 in Washington and Yamhill counties, Oregon. Established in 2010 and situated within the Tualatin River floodplain, the area was once the site of Wapato Lake, a shrub swamp ecosystem. In 1892, attempts began to drain the lake to increase farmland and was completed in the 1930s. Currently, the Wapato Lake Unit consists of historical and extant seasonal emergent and forested wetlands, Oregon ash-dominated riparian forest, mixed coniferous/deciduous forest, and Oregon white oak savanna communities. The proposed vegetation management actions would target the 800 acre degraded Wapato Lake palustrine wetland basin and an additional 200 acres of palustrine wetlands and associated uplands on non-lakebed Service lands. These actions would prepare the site for native plant community re-establishment and hydrologic restoration..

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Vegetation maintenance and planting are within locations for which USFWS conducted historic and cultural resource surveys and consultations. BPA concurred with the determination of no adverse effect to historic properties due to the vegetation maintenance actions.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No heavy equipment would be used during activities. There would be some soil disturbance during discing and planting bare root plants, but would be limited.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Nelson's checker-mallow (*Sidalcea nelsoniana*) is the only Federally-listed species located within the Refuge. Vegetation controls would target undesirable plant species. However, there could be short-term negative impacts to native plant species (both listed and non-listed) during control treatments. Upon completion of vegetation control native grass and forbs would be hand seeded, shrubs and trees would be hand planted. There would be long-term positive impacts by encouraging establishment of native plant species. Impacts to listed species have been considered in BPA's ESA Section 7 consultation (HIP

Number 2021047) with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for BPA's Habitat Improvement Program IV (HIP).

Notes:

- USFWS would adhere to all activity-specific conservation measures identified in BPA's ESA Section 7 consultation with the USFWS and NMFS for BPA's HIP

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Federally-recognized wildlife species at the Refuge. However, several species that occur in the Refuge are Oregon Conservation Strategy Species: olive-sided flycatcher, yellow-breasted chat, acorn woodpecker, Lewis' woodpecker, band-tailed pigeon, western pond turtle and northern red-legged frog. Potential negative impacts to wildlife species as a result of the proposed actions would be limited to the immediate area where there would be a temporary small disturbance, temporary decrease in air quality, and temporary increase in noise disturbance. Impacts would be reduced by following HIP conservation measures. Overall, there would be long-term positive impacts to wildlife.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and Chinook salmon (*O. tshawytscha*) are present in Wapato Creek, which flows approximately 0.25 miles north of the project. Additionally, Pacific lamprey and coastal cutthroat, which may also be present, are Oregon Conservation Strategy Species. Herbicides would not be used for control of aquatic vegetation but would be approved for use near water. Additionally, all HIP control measures for herbicide use would be followed. Potential impacts to aquatic species from herbicide use would be short term and have been considered in BPA's HIP consultation with NMFS. There are no activities that would occur in water. Therefore, there would be no long-term impacts to waterbodies, floodplains, or fish.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not be changing the hydrology within the project area, and any activities within or near wetlands would be limited to vegetation maintenance using methods with little to no ground disturbance. Treated areas would be planted with appropriate native plant species to supplement the existing native plants released from competition. Herbicide treatments are not planned to occur in, or in the vicinity of, wetlands. Potential wetland impacts would be limited and temporary, and there would be a long-term benefit to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or use of groundwater are proposed.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The underlying land use would not change as a result of this project.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would be returning the area to a more natural vegetative condition; there would be no adverse effects to the visual quality of the environment as a result of this project.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minor, temporary effects to the air quality of the environment from exhaust due to vehicle use for site access and vegetation management actions as a result of this project.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minor, temporary effects to the noise quality of the environment from equipment use during vegetation management activities as a result of this project.

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: NA

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

Explanation: NA

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: NA

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: NA

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: Project actions proposed by the USFWS would be implemented by employees or contractors on owned and/or managed land by the USFWS. No external coordination is needed for these activities at these sites.

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

Signed: /s/ Israel Duran

Israel Duran ECF-4
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient CRGT

April 28, 2021

Date