

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Widgeon Prairie Property Acquisition and Stewardship Funding

Project No.: 2011-003-00; BPA-012397

Project Manager: Virginia Preiss – EWM-4

Location: Marion County, Oregon

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 Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians to purchase the Widgeon Prairie, which is a 77-acre parcel of land located about 4 miles south of Turner in Marion County, Oregon. BPA would hold a conservation easement to permanently protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitat. BPA would also provide stewardship funds toward land management and maintenance of the property to the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians.

This conservation easement purchase would partially fulfill BPA's obligations under the Northwest Power Act to protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitat, and would specifically satisfy some of BPA's commitments made in the 2010 "Willamette River Basin Memorandum of Agreement Regarding Wildlife Habitat Protection and Enhancement between the State of Oregon and the Bonneville Power Administration."

The property consists of a complex of wetlands that is composed of a series of wet prairies, ponds, and vernal pools and the remaining grassland habitats are largely absent of woody vegetation. The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians would develop a land management plan to guide the protection and enhancement of habitat and other resources on the property. The land management plan would be drafted within 18 months of closing. 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/ Israel Duran

Israel Duran
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange July 18, 2022

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: Widgeon Prairie Property Acquisition and Stewardship Funding

Project Site Description

The 77-acre Widgeon Prairie property, located about 5 miles south of Turner in Marion County, Oregon, is currently privately owned and BPA would fund its purchase by the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians at closing.

Until 2016 the property was primarily used for cattle grazing. In 2016, substantial habitat conversion and restoration projects began to take place including shallow grading; the installation of several low elevation berms to promote the retention of water on the property, sheet flow, and wet prairie habitat creation; the placement of wood structures for perching habitat; and the removal of invasive vegetation. Currently, the property consists of a mosaic of three habitat types: grassland (~26 acres), wet prairie (~31 acres), and vernal pool and pond habitats (~19 acres), and is used as by a waterfowl hunting club, for aquaculture, and for cattle grazing. The club and aquaculture activities would be discontinued, while the grazing would continue as a land management tool.

No Endangered Species Act-listed plant or animal species are known to currently utilize the property. The property features other important species, including several Oregon Conservation Strategy focal species: western meadowlark (*Sturnella neglecta*), western bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*), purple martin (*Progne subis*), peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), acorn woodpecker (*Melanerpes formicivorus*), black-necked stilt (*Himantopus mexicanus*), and chipping sparrow (*Spizella passerina*).

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 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 Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians 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: Notification letters will be sent to adjacent landowners and other interested parties at a minimum of 15 days before the closing date (proposed closing date September 1 2022) of the sale. Advertisements 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/ Israel Duran July 18, 2022
Israel Duran, ECF-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist