

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Devaney Side Channel Restoration Project

Project No.: 2023-001-00

Project Manager: Virginia Preiss

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: Bonneville proposes to fund the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CTCR) to implement the Devaney Side Channel Project. The project would improve the connection between the Twisp River and two side channels, and is intended to increase habitat complexity beneficial to ESA-listed fish. The project would be constructed in two separate areas; the upstream area is located on land owned by the US Forest Service (USFS) (Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest). The downstream area is located on parcels owned by the Devaney family and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

The USFS side channel enhancements would require excavation of 150 cubic yards (CY) of material along ~200 feet of the existing side channel and the installation two large wood structures. The lower side channel on the Devaney property would involve shifting the side channel inlet upstream, installing two large wood structures, ~30 single logs in the side channel, and excavating 650 CY of material at the inlet and 1,000 CY at the outlet.

These actions 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. These actions also support Bonneville's commitments to the CTCR 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), Bonneville 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, Bonneville 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

July 5, 2023

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: Devaney Side Channel Restoration Project

Project Site Description

The Devaney Side Channel Restoration Project would occur along the Twisp River about five miles upstream from the town of Twisp in Okanogan County, WA. The proposed project site is on private land and land owned by the USFS.

The Twisp River watershed drains the eastern flanks of Washington's North Cascades, with a watershed area above the project reach of 221 square miles. The watershed has a mean elevation of 4,800 feet, and as a function of its high elevation and northern latitude, seasonal flow patterns are largely snowmelt-dominated with a significant proportion of precipitation falling as winter snow, followed by spring flooding as temperatures warm.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Bonneville made a determination of no historic properties affected on May 23, 2023 (BPA CR Project No.: WA 2023 004). Bonneville received an acknowledgement of the report from Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, but no further correspondence was received within the 30-day consultation period.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground-disturbing activities would temporarily disturb top soil in the excavation work areas. Although the project area is generally flat and would not carry high velocity erosive flows, Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be implemented to prevent soils from eroding outside of the work site.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no ESA-listed or sensitive plant species known to exist on the site. Any vegetative impacts that would occur on the site would be temporary and reseeded following construction.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status or ESA-listed wildlife species are documented in or adjacent to the project area and no critical habitat is present. Construction activities would likely create minor noise impacts and wildlife near this area would temporarily avoid the elevated noises, but would return to the area once construction activities have ceased.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction of the proposed project includes in-water work that may result in a temporary increase in turbidity. Due to low-flow conditions and increased water temperature, presence of ESA-listed fish or other species would be unlikely. If necessary, fish salvage (block netting, electrofishing, and handling) would be performed by qualified biologists. BMPs would be implemented to manage sediment and turbidity, and construction operations would be paused during runoff events. The project was reviewed and consulted on under the HIP Biological Opinion under Section 7 of the ESA. The 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. Once completed the project would provide additional off-channel habitat for ESA-listed steelhead, Chinook, and bull trout, which is limited in the lower reaches of the Twisp River.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor ground disturbance would occur on uplands within previously-disturbed areas in the footprint of the existing irrigation system and would not impact any wetlands. Wetlands within Twisp River's historical floodplain, identified during a wetland inventory, would be marked and avoided during construction. The CTCR has obtained Sections 404 and 401 permits for the proposed work. Post-construction existing wetlands are expected to be enhanced by the improved hydraulic regime.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The ground disturbance needed to enhance and improve the side channel areas would not occur at a depth that would affect groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is located on private land and USFS land. Proposed activities would not affect land use or specially-designated areas. Access to the project site is on existing roads and all activities would be compatible with local land uses.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would have minor effects on visual quality during construction due to the presence of construction vehicles and excavated material. The project is not in a visually sensitive area and 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: Any increase in emissions from vehicles accessing the project site would be minor and short term.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation The proposed work would not result in an increase in ambient noise. Any noise emitted from construction equipment would be short term and temporary 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.

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 project would occur on private land and land owned by the USFS. Land owners are supportive of the project and have agreed to its implementation.

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 July 5, 2023
Ted Gresh Date
Environmental Protection Specialist