

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Muddy Springs Culvert Replacement

Project No.: 2010-072-00

Project Manager: Eric Leitzinger, EWM-4

Location: Custer, ID

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 proposes to fund Trout Unlimited (TU) to replace a roadway culvert on Muddy Springs, located on the Pahsimeroi River in Custer County, two miles southwest of May, Idaho. The undersized culvert is a velocity barrier to juvenile Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) and steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), preventing their access to available habitat upstream. Replacing the culvert with a larger elliptical arch culvert would provide access to an additional 0.65 miles of rearing habitat.

The existing 30-inch-diameter round culvert currently crosses under a narrow unsurfaced farm road. The existing culvert would be replaced with a 6.3-foot-wide, 17-foot-long, arch culvert on concrete footings. About fifty feet of stream channel, both upstream and downstream of the new culvert, would be reconstructed to better match Muddy Springs' alignment. Small wood structures in varying configurations would be installed upstream and downstream of the culvert crossing to enhance habitat and cover for juvenile fish, increase instream complexity, and narrow the channel. These structures would be constructed with a combination of whole trees, root wads, willow branches, and willow clumps. After culvert installation, the roadbed would be reconstructed in the same alignment as the pre-project condition.

This proposed action fulfills commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion and would support conservation of Endangered Species Act-listed species considered in the 2020 Endangered Species Act consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on the operation and maintenance of the Columbia River System. This action also supports 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/ Robert W. Shull

Robert W. Shull

Contract Environmental Protection Specialist

CorSource Technology Group

Reviewed by:

/s/ Michelle Eraut

Michelle Eraut

Deputy Executive Manager

Concur:

Katey C. Grange

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: Muddy Springs Culvert Replacement

Project Site Description

The project is located on Muddy Springs, a spring-sourced creek in the flat floodplain of the Pahsimeroi River. The vegetation is almost exclusively meadow grasses, sedges, and brushes with only a few willow bushes located a few hundred feet above and below the site.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A survey was conducted, and an inventory report was completed documenting that no cultural resources were identified within the area potentially affected by the project. Consultation with tribes and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) was initiated on February 23, 2022, with a determination that there would be no historic properties affected by this action. No responses were received from the tribes and SHPO replied on March 8, 2022, concurring with this determination.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Only 100 lineal feet of stream channel and 70 lineal feet of road prism would be excavated and reconstructed. Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be applied to minimize soil loss to water and wind erosion. Topsoil would be salvaged and placed over graded surfaces after construction to maintain soil productivity on the site.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The construction site would impact only grasses and other grass-like plants and forbs. Sedge mats would be salvaged for replacement along the stream, and bare soils would be re-seeded following construction. No plant species listed under the Endangered Species Act or special-status species listed by the State of Idaho are present.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wildlife species listed under the Endangered Species Act or special-status species listed by the State of Idaho are present, and very little wildlife habitat would be impacted. That which would be impacted is a simple meadow grassland habitat type, which is readily restored by seeding and planting.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Less than 100 feet of stream habitat would be disturbed, much of which had already been compromised by the existing road and culvert. That which would be disturbed would be reconstructed to provide more and better habitat than was there previously. The stream would be narrowed, and logs and willows would be installed to improve fish habitat.

Three species listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act are present in the project area: Snake River spring/summer Chinook salmon (part of the Upper Salmon Major Population Group), Snake River steelhead (part of the Salmon River Major Population Group), and bull trout. The State of Idaho lists spring/summer Chinook salmon as “critically imperiled” and Snake River steelhead as “imperiled,” but lists bull trout as “not rare and apparently secure.” No other listed species of concern are present. Impacts from the proposed action were consulted on in compliance with the Endangered Species Act and the conclusion was that the action may affect these listed species, but it would be unlikely to adversely affect them (HIP PNF 2023).

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All project work would be conducted within riparian wetlands, but project actions would not reduce the amount of wetland once complete. Wetland conditions would also be restored through grading to maintain effective connection with the floodplain and by planting to maintain wetland vegetative conditions. Actions within wetlands would be authorized and guided by terms and conditions included as part of a permit issued under the Clean Water Act by the Corps of Engineers to Trout Unlimited.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no ground water withdrawal, and restoration designs call for the stream above and below the new culvert to maintain effective connection of the stream with its floodplain thus ensuring continued groundwater recharge during annual high flow and other flooding conditions.

The operation of construction equipment activities may have a short-term potential to impact ground water quality slightly from possible fuel or other fluid drips or spills, but best management practices and conservation measures from Bonneville’s ESA consultation would be applied that would prevent or minimize this potential (e.g., equipment cleaning, staging locations, fuel storage requirements, etc.).

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no land use changes, and no specially-designated areas are present. No project action would not change the land’s capability to be used as it previously was.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The new culvert would be replacing an existing culvert, so there would be no long-term change to visual quality. There would be short-term scenery impacts from the presence of construction equipment and vegetation removal (until revegetation measures succeed in green-up).

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Driving of trucks and operation of construction equipment would produce emissions, but the amount would be minimal and short-term, and consistent with that produced by local agricultural activities.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Noise sources would be from trucks and operation of construction equipment. Noise would be consistent with that produced by local agricultural activities and would be short-term. These impacts would occur during daylight hours during the late summer and fall months.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No long-term public safety hazards would be created with this project. Routine, short-term, safety hazards would be expected from the incremental addition of truck traffic on local roads, and the operation of construction equipment.

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 associated with this culvert has already been coordinating with Trout Unlimited on the need for it, its design and the construction schedule. Construction would proceed following notification of, and in cooperation with, the affected landowner.

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

Signed: <u>/s/ Robert W. Shull</u>	<u>August 16, 2023</u>
Robert W. Shull	Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist	
CorSource Technology Group	