

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Shillapoo Wildlife Area Prescribed Burning

Project No.: 2003-012-00

Project Manager: Allan Whiting, EWL - 4

Location: Clark County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 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 to fund the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to increase goose forage in Clark County, Washington. The land is part of the WDFW-owned and managed Shillapoo Wildlife Area (Shillapoo WA).

WDFW would conduct a prescribed burn at three units within Shillapoo WA. A total of about 83.5 acres of the Shillapoo WA would be treated. To create fire lines for containing fire activities WDFW would use a tractor to cut a grass path, followed by a chain harrow to incorporate the vegetation into the top inch of topsoil prior to burning; WDFW employees would complete ignitions on foot by hand utilizing drip torches. Multiple UTVs with water would be on site patrolling the fire line to avoid spread of the fire outside of the prescribed burn location. Local fire department would be informed of fire activities prior to prescribed burn in case the fire was to increase in a way that was not intended and WDFW was no longer able to control it. The goal of these prescribed burns would be to increase or enhance goose foraging habitat by removing invasive species and stimulating native species.

Funding the proposed activities 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 1021.102 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; 89 FR 34074, April 30, 2024; 90 FR 29676, July 3, 2025 [Interim Final Rule]) and the current *DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Procedures*, BPA has determined the following:

- 1) The proposed action fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021;
- 2) The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion; and

- 3) There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal (see attached Environmental Evaluation).

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

Catherine Clark
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Evaluation

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Evaluation

This evaluation 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

The proposed project would be located in Vancouver, Washington in Clark County. The land is on WDFW owned and managed property known as Shillapoo WA. The Shillapoo WA is approximately 2,420 acres and is located within the floodplain of the Columbia River. It is managed as three separate management units; Shillapoo North, Shillapoo South, and Vancouver Lake. The area is currently a mix of agricultural land and developed pasture intermixed with fragmented pieces of natural habitat of varying quality.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: On July 17, 2026, BPA completed a combined initiation and determination consultation (WA 2026 142) under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) on the proposed project. Consulting parties for the proposed project included the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation, Chinook Indian Nation, and Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). BPA determined that the project would not adversely affect historic properties. DAHP concurred with the determination on July 20, 2026. No additional comments were received from consulting parties within the 30-day comment period.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA would require that work be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA and in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action of creating a fire break with a chained harrow would involve disturbance of soils, but soils would not migrate beyond the created fire break. No other ground-disturbing actions are proposed; therefore, the burning actions would not have the potential to substantially affect geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed, or state special-status plant species are within the project sites. Proposed activities would remove invasive species and encourage native vegetation growth. Project activities would have a beneficial long-term effect on plants and would have no effect on ESA-listed or state special-status plants.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Wildlife species may be temporarily displaced during proposed activities due to prescribed burning, increase noise, and human presence, but would be expected to move to adjacent available habitat and return to the area once burning is completed. BPA completed an individual Section 7 consultation for Streaked Horned Lark (SHL) and Columbia White-tailed Deer (CWTD) for the project. The action would be likely to adversely affect SHL and not likely to adversely affect for CWTD. A Biological Opinion was returned from USFWS (Ref# 01EWF00-2018-F-0357) on June 13, 2019 and the proposed timeframe of this consultation is 10 years or the end of the federal fiscal year 2028. No other ESA-listed species would be in the project work areas; therefore, there would be no effect on these species. State special-status species may be present in the project area and would temporarily distribute to adjacent habitat and are anticipated to return back to the project area once activities are completed. Based on the abundant alternate habitat within the wildlife area, the prescribed burns are not anticipated to have a substantial effect on state special-status species.

Notes:

- Implement conservation measures and terms and conditions to protect SHL and their habitat as identified in the Section 7 consultation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Listed salmonids found in the Columbia River, Lake River, and Vancouver Lake adjacent to the wildlife area land include coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), chum salmon (*Oncorhynchus keta*), Snake River sockeye salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*), and Columbia River steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). The proposed actions would not physically alter any aquatic habitat that listed species occupy. The project location is closed off from the Columbia River system by levees; therefore, the proposed actions would not impact listed nor non-listed species. There would be no adverse physical changes to waterbodies, floodplains, or fish from the proposed actions.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: WDFW maintains all wetlands cut off from the river that are located within the wildlife area. All activities would be completed outside of wetland areas, and no actions proposed would modify wetlands or riparian areas. Some riparian vegetation may be affected due to burning activities. Project activities would have a beneficial long-term effect on vegetation by removing large areas of invasive species and creating space for native vegetation to grow.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no groundwater withdrawal. Burning activities would have no potential to reach groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Burning on the proposed project sites would not change the capability of the land to be used as it was prior to proposed activities. Proposed activities would remove invasive species from sections of the wildlife area managed for goose foraging as part of the WDFW Shillapoo WA management plan. There would be temporary disruptions to recreational users during burning activities for the safety of users; however, areas would be reopened to recreation once burning activities have completed and there are alternate areas within the wildlife area for recreationists. There would be no impact to specially designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Burning activities would be limited to a short period of time, would result in no long-term impairments, and would ultimately improve vegetation conditions and enhance the project sites to a more natural visual appearance.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Prescribed burning activities would result in a period of reduced air quality; however, burning would be limited to a short period of time and when weather conditions are favorable.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in ambient noise may occur during implementation. Any noise emitted from activities would be short-term and temporary during daylight hours.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: This activity would be conducted by professionals and would not be considered hazardous and would not result in any health or safety risks to the general public. All workers implementing the project would follow OSHA guidelines. WDFW would be on site and have posted notices to keep recreational users out of areas while burning occurs.

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: WDFW is the manager of the Shillapoo WA being accessed and maintained and is responsible for the actions considered in this CX determination.

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

Signed:

Catherine Clark
Environmental Protection Specialist