

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Goose Haven Lake Wetland Enhancement

Project No.: 1992-061-06

Project Manager: Elizabeth Santana, EWM-4

Location: Benewah County, Idaho

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 Coeur d'Alene Tribe (CDAT) to implement the Goose Haven Wetland Restoration Project. The project would support improvement of wildlife habitat for surrounding areas by enhancing existing wetlands, increasing wetland diversity by establishing native plant communities, and minimizing invasive plant habitat (mainly reed canary grass).

The project would reroute existing ditches, excavate new ponds and connector channels for improved water flow, and create islands to improve wildlife habitat. Ditch fill plugs would be installed to limit excessive drainage in the ditches, redirect water flow, and enhance wetland hydrology. Approximately 48,500 cubic yards of material would be excavated to create six ponds and ditches connecting the ponds. A water control structure would be installed downstream of the ponds, before water flows to Goose Haven Lake, to manage water levels. Excavated material would be repurposed onsite for building three islands (within three of the ponds) and constructing ditch plugs. Excess material would be placed to the west of the ponds to create an upland grassland (about 7 acres). Proposed activities would occur over approximately 85 acres and directly impact about 25 acres.

The proposed restoration work would use heavy construction machinery such as excavators and bulldozers for excavation and grading. During construction, temporary access roads (about 1.5 miles) and one equipment and material staging area (less than an acre) would be established in the project area. To stabilize the site after construction, disturbed areas would be revegetated with a weed-free native grass seed mix and mulched to prevent further erosion and encourage native plant growth. Trees and shrubs (container plants) would be planted in the project area and protected with fencing in subsequent years. Equipment (such as a backhoe or smaller machine with auger attachment) would be used to plant along banks and the floodplain. Planting on islands would be completed by hand with hand tools. Replanting efforts would occur in subsequent years in areas where there are mortalities or the plant community is slow to establish.

Funding the proposed actions would support ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System 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.

Jacquelyn Schei
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.

Proposed Action: Goose Haven Lake Wetland Enhancement

Project Site Description

The project area is located at the southern end of Coeur d'Alene Lake in Benewah County, Idaho, to the west of the St. Joe River. The property is within the exterior boundaries of the Coeur d'Alene Reservation and is owned by CDAT. It has been designated for waterfowl and wildlife habitat improvement. The project is in the floodplain of the St. Joe River; however, the road prism of Highway 3 (running along the river) is a levee which has disconnected the river from the floodplain. There are no direct inlets from, or outlets to, the St. Joe River from the project area. Water input to the project area from the St. Joe River is via groundwater exchange or seepage through the levee. Project activities would take place upstream of Goose Haven Lake, which also does not have any direct connections to the St. Joe River. The project area contains a degraded wetland dominated by invasive plant species such as reed canary grass, which covers about half the project site. The project area is typically wet and has a shallow groundwater surface throughout the year. A series of ditches and pump stations exist within the site and downstream of Goose Haven Lake for agricultural purposes. Other ecological communities within the project site include upland areas consisting of shrub, grassland, and scrub-shrub types. Forested uplands can be found across the road (Goose Haven Road) from the project area. Surrounding areas are agricultural and residential lands.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with CDAT and the CDAT Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) on December 5, 2025 (BPA Cultural Resources No.: ID 2024 066). On July 20, 2026, BPA provided consulting parties with a summary of BPA's efforts to identify historic properties and BPA's determination of no historic properties affected. No responses were received by the end of the 30-day consultation period.

Notes:

- The project would coordinate with the THPO for cultural training and notification procedures prior to the start of construction.
- If cultural material is inadvertently encountered during implementation, the THPO would be notified and would coordinate and assess the finding in consultation with BPA.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be temporary impacts to geology and soils due to displacement and compaction of soil from the operation of heavy equipment. About 47,500 cubic yards of soil would be excavated and graded to reroute ditches and create ponds/channels. Excavated material would be repurposed on-site to create islands, create fill plugs that would limit excessive drainage and redirect water flow for ponds and channels, and create an upland grassland area. Disturbed areas would be revegetated to prevent future erosion. Soil management and erosion control best management practices (BMPs), such as using silt fencing around work areas and grading work areas to match surrounding grades, would be implemented during and after construction to minimize impacts.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed species or state special-status plants are known to be present in the project area. In the short term, minor and temporary vegetation impacts would occur. Existing vegetation would be removed during excavation and trampled in other work areas. In the long term, planting and seeding with native plant species and implementing restoration actions to enhance the native wetland plant communities would result in a beneficial effect.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed or state special-status wildlife species or habitats are documented within the project site. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC) tool lists the grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) and the North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*), both ESA-listed Threatened, as having the potential to be in the project area. In addition, IPaC lists the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*), ESA-proposed Threatened, and Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee (*Bombus suckleyi*), ESA-proposed Endangered, as having the potential to be present in the project area. There is no designated critical habitat for ESA-listed or proposed wildlife species in the project area and no confirmed presence of any of the species in the project area. Due to the site's elevation (below 3,000 feet and below typical elevations for wolverine resident and maternal habitat), proximity to Highway 3 and residences, and lack of native vegetation, it is unlikely these species would be present in the project area. In addition, the project is not within any of Idaho's grizzly bear recovery zones or estimated occupied ranges. Therefore, the project would have no effect on ESA-listed or proposed wildlife species.

IPaC information indicates that bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) are likely present in Benewah County year-round and golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) may be present for several months of the year. There is no confirmed presence of nests or previously used nest sites for bald or golden eagles in the project area, and the project would be starting near the end of the typical breeding season (mid-August). In addition, there are no mature trees in the project site suitable for nests. If a nest is observed in the project area, CDAT would employ protection measures (e.g., timing, distance) as necessary to ensure eagles would not be harmed as a result of the project. Therefore, the project would have no adverse impacts to bald or golden eagles.

There would be temporary disturbances to resident wildlife due to human presence and equipment use. Conservation measures would be used to minimize impacts. Equipment use would occur after nesting and breeding seasons of migratory birds. No habitats would be modified to any degree that might permanently displace resident wildlife, though some may be temporarily displaced by disturbance from equipment operation and human presence. Wildlife would likely use adjacent suitable habitat and would reoccupy the site following completion of the proposed activities. The proposed project is expected to improve wetland habitat for wildlife, specifically for waterfowl by providing nesting and foraging habitat in the long term.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed or state special-status fish species or habitats are present within the project site. There are bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), ESA-listed Threatened, in the St. Joe River, but there are no direct inlet or outlets from the project area to the river that would allow fish into the project area; therefore, the project would not impact any ESA-listed fish species. The project area is in the historical floodplain of the St. Joe River but is

disconnected by Highway 3. There is limited input of water from the river via groundwater exchange or seepage through the levee. The project does not involve additions of fill to jurisdictional waters that would require a Clean Water Act permit. Flow in the channels (ditch system) would be diverted where necessary using coffer dams or side channels to isolate work areas and dewater them before construction. Erosion and sediment control best management practices, such as silt fencing, floating booms, or block nets, would be implemented to prevent any runoff or transfer of sediment to free-flowing water. In the long term, the project would increase inundation of water throughout the area and beyond, over about 385 acres. This, along with native plantings, would return the floodplain to a more natural state.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Surveys conducted in 2024 determined the presence of three low-quality, emergent, non-jurisdictional wetland areas within the general project area. Direct physical alteration of these existing wetland areas would occur through excavation, grading, and filling. This includes temporary disruption of wetland hydrology and removal of existing vegetation. Some wetlands would be converted to open water after excavation of ponds and ditches. In the long term, the project would support improvement of wetland communities by increasing water levels and native wetland plantings throughout the area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or use of groundwater are proposed. The proposed project would have no negative impact on groundwater or aquifers and would have a long-term benefit by improving groundwater exchange in newly inundated areas.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The underlying land use would not change. CDAT owns the property and has designated it for conservation of fish and wildlife. There would be no impact to specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary and permanent changes to visual quality would occur during and after the construction. Short-term changes to the landscape would occur during construction, such as work zone conditions, vehicles, equipment, and exposed soils. In the long term, new ponds, islands, increased inundation of the area, a grassy upland area, and native plants would be visible. These components would return the project area to a more natural condition, which would improve visual quality overall.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minor temporary effects on air quality from vehicle and equipment exhaust during construction. Impacts would be comparable to those from typical agricultural equipment use during the year. Normal conditions would return upon project completion.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would result in a temporary increase in ambient noise. Any noise emitted from crews and equipment would be short term and temporary, occur during daylight hours, 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 public. Operating construction vehicles and equipment inherently carries potential safety risks to operators; staff training and implementing best management practices, such as daily on-site safety precautions, would minimize that risk during construction activities.

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 proposed project would be implemented on land owned by CDAT and designated for waterfowl and wildlife habitat conservation.

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

Signed:

Jacquelyn Schei
Environmental Protection Specialist