

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Coyote Creek Beaver Dam Analog Project

Project No.: 2008-301-00

Project Manager: Daniel Newberry, EWL-4

Location: Wasco County, Oregon

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 Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (CTWS) to install nine beaver dam analog (BDA) structures within Coyote Creek.

Specifically, nine channel-spanning BDAs would be installed within approximately 1,000 feet of Coyote Creek. Hand tools and a mini excavator mounted with a hydraulic post pounder would be used to construct the structures. BDA structures would be reinforced with natural, untreated posts that are approximately 4 inches in diameter. Posts would be spaced 1.5 feet to 2 feet apart and driven into the streambed using an excavator mounted hydraulic post pounder or by hand and woven with branches and small woody debris. Post height would be trimmed and leveled to a minimum of 1 foot above bankfull elevation to encourage sheet flow and reduce scouring. The BDA structures span across the stream channel and would range in length from 15 to 70 feet and approximately 1 foot wide. Vegetation for the BDA fill material would be locally sourced or gathered onsite, including the utilization of upland plant species, juniper and ponderosa pine, harvested by hand or excavator.

The CTWS would also plant native shrubs and trees from seeds, plugs, or live cuttings within the riparian areas along the project reach and install and replace aging fence infrastructure to protect plantings. All planting would be accomplished by hand. All access and staging would be along existing roadways. Instream work would occur during the fall of 2026 and planting work would take place through the fall. Staging for equipment and materials would be in previously disturbed areas adjacent to work areas. All access would be along existing roadways. Following BDA construction and planting efforts, all disturbed areas would be reseeded with native grass seed mix, as needed. Disturbed areas along the riverbanks would be planted with riparian plant forbs after BDA construction.

Project areas would be monitored for several years after work is complete. If failures in system function, structure function and integrity, or riverscape processes occur, the project's adaptive management procedures would be implemented. These procedures may include installation of new structures of the same type originally installed, modification of structures, or replanting and reseeded if the native plant community is slow to establish or there is low survival in restored areas.

In addition, spring water collection equipment would be decommissioned to return flow to its relic channel and Coyote Creek by disconnecting the spring box (a structure used to collect groundwater coming from a spring). No structures would be removed under this project.

These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with both National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on the operation and maintenance of the Columbia River System. These actions also support Bonneville's 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.

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Israel Duran
Environmental Protection Specialist

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Concur:

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NEPA Compliance Officer

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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: Coyote Creek Beaver Dam Analog Project

Project Site Description

The Coyote Creek watershed is a highly degraded ephemeral non-fish bearing drainage that is characterized by erosion and high-water temperatures. This degraded system is a major contributor to the heightened levels of sediment and high temperatures in Beaver Creek and the lower Warm Springs River. Both Beaver Creek and the Warm Springs River supports all life stages of ESA-listed mid-Columbia River summer steelhead, Mid-Columbia spring Chinook salmon, ESA-listed bull trout, Pacific lamprey, native mussels and resident-band trout. Intensive livestock grazing and road development within Coyote Creek has led to: (1) degraded channel structure and complexity; (2) degraded water quality due to elevated water temperatures; and (3) altered sediment routing and bed load retention. These issues are explicitly identified as factors limiting salmonid production in the Deschutes Subbasin. Due to the current conditions at the site, it is likely that installation would occur in the dry.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA made a determination of No Historic Properties Affected and consulted with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and CTWS Tribal Historic Office on July 2, 2026 (BPA CR Project No.: ID 2026 043). Without consulting party comment, the 30-day consultation period for the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 consultation ended August 26, 2026. No additional comments were received from consulting parties.

Notes:

- In the event any archaeological material is encountered during project activities, work would be stopped immediately and a BPA Archaeologist would be notified, as well as consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, short-term soil disturbance from BDA installation, fencing replacement, and plantings. All work would be done with hand tools or mini excavator to minimize impacts.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no listed plant species within the project area (US Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation [IPaC], 2026.) No other Federal or State special-status plant species are within the project sites. Streamside equipment may require minor disturbance to nearby plants that are hindering installation, but no broad-scale vegetation removal is proposed.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Wildlife may be temporarily displaced by construction noise during implementation or maintenance, but would return to the project area once after construction. Disturbance would occur over a short time period and little habitat disruption would occur. The project area has the potential to contain ESA-listed gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) (IPaC, 2026). The monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) and Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee (*Bombus suckleyi*) are proposed for ESA listing and may be in the project area. No other Federal or State special-status species or habitat are known to exist on the project site. However, there are no critical habitats for ESA-listed or proposed species in the project area and no confirmed presence of any of the species within the project area. Due to lack of native vegetation and forested areas, it is highly unlikely these species would be present. Therefore, there would be no impact from the installation of the BDAs or other aspects of the project.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Coyote Creek does not contain Endangered Species Act-listed fish species. IPAC identified that bull trout may be present, however the ephemeral nature of the Coyote Creek would likely preclude fish from the project area and construction is likely to occur in the dry. Minor, short-term disturbance to aquatic life may occur during BDA installation, but is unlikely. The amount of sediment displacement is low and the BDAs would be installed with best management practices designed to minimize the severity and duration of temporary water quality impacts. There would be no adverse physical changes to water bodies, floodplains, or fish resulting from the BDA installation and plantings; however, the work is expected to improve channel structure and complexity, water temperatures, and sediment routing and bed load retention within the project area. This would also provide improved water quality for ESA-listed fish downstream of the project in Beaver Creek and Warms Springs River.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands within the BDA installation and planting area; however, the current spring box is located in a wetland. Work at the spring would only involve disconnecting the spring box. The work is expected to improve/create wetland habitat by restoring groundwater flow to the wetland as the project matures. Thus, the action would have beneficial impacts to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Only minor ground disturbing activities are proposed and the actions would not result in an increase in groundwater use. Disconnecting the spring box and allowing the entirety of the spring to flow through its relic channel would facilitate ground water recharge and native plant recolonization throughout the lower meadow. The work would change the hydrological regime and, therefore, would have beneficial impacts to groundwater recharge.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Access to field sites is on existing road networks and all activities are compatible with local land use. Land use would not change. The project is not located in a specially-designated area or Wild and Scenic River.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Changes to the landscape would occur during construction, such as work zone conditions, vehicles, and equipment, but these changes would be short term and removed after construction. The BDAs would be expected to last several years, but would blend into the natural visual aspect of the project areas as they age. Therefore, the proposed action would have a minor permanent impact on visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A temporary increase in emissions and dust from vehicles accessing the project site would be very minor and short-term during construction. Emissions and dust levels would return to normal conditions immediately once the project is completed.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would result in a temporary increase in ambient noise. Any noise emitted from construction equipment would be short-term and temporary 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 general public. Personnel are trained in proper equipment management techniques, and all applicable safety regulations would be followed. There would be no soil contamination or hazardous conditions and no CERCLA sites exist within the project area.

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 or explanation if applicable.

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: The project would be completed in coordination with the CTWS on the CTWS reservation. The proposed activities would occur according to terms and conditions for access and use of the lands.

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

Signed: **ISRAEL DURAN**
Israel Duran
Environmental Protection Specialist

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