



Department of Energy

Bonneville Power Administration
P.O. Box 3621
Portland, OR 97208-3621

ENVIRONMENT, FISH & WILDLIFE

September 19, 2022

In reply refer to: ECF-4

To: People interested in the Uma-Birch Floodplain Reconnection Project

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is proposing to fund the Uma-Birch Floodplain Reconnection Project. This letter explains the proposal, outlines our anticipated environmental review process and schedule, requests your comments, and invites you to a public meeting.

Proposal: BPA proposes to provide funding to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation to enhance fish and wildlife habitat on about a 275-acre area along a one-mile stretch of the Umatilla River (between river miles 48.7 and 49.7) and along Birch Creek (river mile 0.0 to 0.3) at its confluence with the Umatilla River, near the town of Rieth, in Umatilla County, Oregon.

Project activities would include modification or removal of most of the US Army Corps of Engineers' certified Pendleton 2-A levee as well as artificial berms to restore natural hydrology and reactivate the historic floodplain. The project would include options to maintain the current level of flood protection provided by the existing levee through a new levee or additional reinforcements to Birch Creek Road.

Fish and wildlife habitat enhancement activities would include realigning Birch Creek's main channel to its historic meander, realigning the Umatilla River into the floodplain areas previously restricted by the levee, and excavating side channels and wetland areas along both Birch Creek and the Umatilla River to improve secondary channel and floodplain interactions to benefit fish and wildlife. In addition, the project would include options to remove existing livestock infrastructure and relocate buildings at the site. (See enclosed project map.)

Environmental Review: To understand the potential environmental impacts of this proposal, BPA may prepare an environmental assessment (EA). If BPA determines that an EA should be prepared, the EA will describe anticipated impacts to natural and human resources and include mitigation measures that would help avoid or minimize impacts. We are asking for your comments to help determine the issues that should be addressed in the environmental review. During this process, BPA will work with Federal, state, and local agencies, Tribes, potentially affected landowners, and other interest groups. The proposed schedule for the environmental review process is as follows:

Scoping comment period	September 19, 2022 to October 19, 2022
Public scoping meetings	October 4, 2022 in Pendleton, Oregon
EA determination	Winter 2023
Draft EA available for public comment (if warranted)	Winter 2023
Final EA (if warranted)	Spring 2023
Finding of No Significant Impact (if warranted)	Spring 2023
If decision to build, construction start	Summer/Fall 2023

Public Meeting: We have scheduled an informal, open-house scoping meeting to answer questions and accept comments about the scope of the environmental review:

**October 4, 2022
5:00-7:00PM
Pendleton Convention Center
1601 Westgate
Pendleton, Oregon 97801**

How to Comment: Please send your comments by **October 19th** and reference the *Uma-Birch Floodplain Reconnection Project*. All comments will be available on the project website at www.bpa.gov/nepa/uma-birch. There are several ways to comment:

Mail: Bonneville Power Administration
Communications – DKE-7
P.O. Box 14428
Portland, OR 97291-4428

Toll-free: 800-622-4519
FAX: 503-230-4019
Online: www.bpa.gov/comment
Email: communication@bpa.gov

For More Information: If you have questions regarding the environmental review process, please contact me at 503-230-3928, or by e-mail at jjmaslow@bpa.gov. You can also reach us toll free at 1-800-622-4519.

Thank you for your interest in our work.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jeff Maslow

Jeff Maslow

Senior Environmental Protection Specialist