

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Walla Walla Fish Passage Operations and Maintenance

Project No.: 2007-217-00

Project Manager: Corrie Veenstra, EWM-4

Location: Umatilla County, Oregon and Walla Walla County, Washington

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: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is proposing to continue funding the Gardena Farms Irrigation District (GFID) and Hudson Bay District Improvement Company (HBDIC) to conduct fish passage operations and maintenance (O&M) activities at fishway and irrigation diversion facilities in the Walla Walla River Basin. The GFID would perform O&M activities in Walla Walla County, Washington at the Gardena Farms (Burlingame) Diversion Fish Screen and the Garden City-Lowden No. 2 Diversion Fish Screens and HBDIC would perform O&M activities in Umatilla County, Oregon at the Little Walla Walla Diversion Fish Screen and the Nursery Bridge Dam East Fish Ladder. The goal of the O&M activities is to increase survival of migrating salmonids including bull trout in the Walla Walla River.

These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System, while also supporting 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.).

The O&M activities would include routine tasks that occur on a daily, weekly, annual, and as needed basis (e.g., checking equipment, cleaning trash racks, etc.). The routine tasks would be carried out on the existing infrastructure to maintain designed operation. O&M would also include emergency/urgent corrective actions (e.g., instream gravel/cobble movement, debris clearing) that may be needed to restore fish passage that has been degraded or blocked through gravel/cobble/debris deposits caused by high flow events. Up to 1,900 cubic yards of gravel/cobble may be shifted or relocated in the channel at the Nursery Bridge facility. In typical years, much less than 1,900 cubic yards would be moved for corrective actions. Gravel/cobble moved during emergency/routine corrective actions and more routine O&M would be either shifted in the channel or placed downstream below ordinary high water at the Nursery Bridge and Little Walla Walla sites, left in stream, or staged adjacent to the facility (Gardena Farms). No gravel/cobble from outside of the river channel would be removed or manipulated and no ground disturbance outside of the river channel would occur. Work areas would be accessed via existing

access roads. In-stream work would occur within the in-water work window except when an emergency/urgent corrective action is needed to restore fish passage. Emergency/urgent corrective action would be done in coordination with USFWS, NMFS, and BPA and done in a manner that is consistent with the project's biological opinions.

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/ Brenda Aguirre
Brenda Aguirre
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

<u>/s/ Katey C. Grange</u>	<u>December 4, 2020</u>
Katey C. Grange	Date
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: Walla Walla Fish Passage Operations and Maintenance

Project Site Description

All activities would occur at existing fishway and irrigation diversion facilities located within the Walla Walla River Basin in Umatilla County, Oregon and Walla Walla County, Washington. The Walla Walla River is a tributary to the Columbia River. The Walla Walla enters the Columbia in southeastern Washington and has its headwaters in northeastern Oregon. Below is a list of the project sites by county and their Township, Range, and Section.

Umatilla County, Oregon:

Little Walla Walla Diversion Fish Screen	T5N, R35E, Sec12
Nursery Bridge Dam East Fish Ladder	T5N, R35E, Sec1

Walla Walla County, Washington:

Gardena Farms (Burlingame) Diversion Fish Screen	T6N, R35E, Sec39
Garden City-Lowden No. 2 Diversion Fish Screens	T7N, R34E, Sec35

The Washington project sites are surrounded by lands used for agricultural crop production and grazing. The Oregon project sites are located within Milton-Freewater and are surrounded by rural community infrastructure and agricultural land uses. Vegetation at the sites consists of native and non-native riparian trees, shrubs and forbs.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A BPA Archaeologist reviewed the O&M activities and determined that these types of activities are covered under existing Section 106 consultations. WA SHPO concurrence on no adverse effect determination was received on December 16, 2013. Umatilla Tribe was consulted; no response within 30 days. OR SHPO response on no adverse effect determination was received on March 19, 2013. Umatilla Tribe was consulted; no response within 30 days.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would remove accumulations of gravel and debris at passage facilities and deposit materials at designated off-site locations or redeposit the material into designated disposal areas below ordinary high water marks.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Work would have a small effect on plants due to equipment crushing some plants while accessing work areas. Operations and maintenance activities would be implemented within designated, previously disturbed areas or within the stream channel. Federal/state special-status species and habitats are not present in the project areas.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary disturbance associated with increased vehicle traffic, operation of heavy equipment, and human presence during implementation of operations and maintenance actions.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: O&M activities that entail debris removal or gravel/cobble movement would generate turbidity while removing accumulated materials at the work sites and have a temporary effect on water bodies. During routine O&M activities, work would be conducted during the in-water work window and include the use of sediment containment measures to help minimize the amount and extent of temporary turbidity. Turbidity generated during emergency activities would occur at a time of high background turbidity and high flows and quickly return to the existing high background level.

Clean Water Act (CWA) coverage for routine and emergency O&M activities is exempt from federal and state permit requirements except for non-maintenance activities in the channel or if greater than 50 cubic yards of gravel need to be removed from a site. For HBDIC to remove 1,900 cubic yards of accumulated material behind the Nursery Bridge ladder annually HBDIC obtained CWA 404 and 401 coverages from the Corps and Oregon DEQ via BPA's Regional General Permit-6 and a removal-fill permit from the OR Division of State Lands on September 13, 2019. HBDIC would follow all terms and conditions specified in their CWA permits.

There would be no net rise in floodplain elevations.

Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed fish species (steelhead and bull trout) and their designated critical habitats are present in the project areas. Effects of the ongoing O&M activities on ESA-listed steelhead and bull trout and their designated critical habitats are addressed in biological opinions issued by the NMFS and USFWS as follows:

- NMFS for OR facilities: Nursery Bridge BiOp dated 8/26/2011; and Little Walla Walla BiOp dated 11/21/2011.
- NMFS for WA facilities: Gardena Farms & Garden City per NMFS, BiOp dated 11/9/2006 still applicable as long as the actions described in the BiOp are still occurring.
- USFWS for OR & WA facilities: Nursery Bridge, Little Walla Walla, Gardena Farms, & Garden City BiOp dated 4/24/2012.

Note:

- GFID and HBDIC would report emergency/urgent or corrective actions that would occur outside of the in-water-work-window to NMFS, USFWS, and BPA. These activities would be completed in accordance with the terms and conditions outlined in the ESA biological opinions.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands within the project sites and therefore no impact to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The activities would not impact groundwater or aquifers. There are no new wells or use of ground water proposed, and spill prevention measures would be present on site during use of heavy equipment.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No changes to land use or specially-designated areas. All work would occur at existing fishway and irrigation diversion facilities.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No changes to visual quality. All work would occur at existing fishway and irrigation diversion facilities and would not change the visual character of the areas.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary generation of emissions associated with increased vehicle traffic and equipment operation during implementation of operations and maintenance actions.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, intermittent noise during implementation of operations and maintenance actions.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project sponsor is required to use best management practices to protect worker health and safety. Any activities involving hazardous materials would be disposed of at a designated hazardous waste facility.

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: Implementation of operations and maintenance activities would not cause impacts to surrounding landowners. The project sponsor has coordinated with the underlying land owners and has permission to conduct ongoing O&M activities.

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

Signed: /s/ Brenda Aguirre December 4, 2020
Brenda Aguirre, ECF-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist