

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Columbia Land Trust Estuarine Restoration Weed Treatment, Fence Installation, and Maintenance

Project No.: 2010-073-00

Project Manager: Anne Creason

Location: Columbia and Wahkiakum Counties, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 – Routine Maintenance

Description of the Proposed Action:

BPA proposes to continue funding the Columbia Land Trust (CLT) for ongoing weed control, planting, native plant maintenance, future planting site preparation, fence removal, and fence installation at Columbia Stock Ranch; vegetation maintenance and weed control at Lower Elochoman 2; and vegetation control planting site preparation at Lower Elochoman 3. The recovery of Columbia River salmonids requires that a sufficient amount and diversity of habitat is available in the estuary to accommodate the full spectrum of stocks and life history types in the basin. To accomplish this, the primary objective of this contract is to increase the diversity, extent, and spatial distribution of habitats capable of supporting multiple salmon ESUs and life history types and also to manage the property to recover ecological integrity and function to support Columbian White-Tailed Deer (CWTD).

All restoration actions conceived of and implemented within these projects are intended to benefit threatened and endangered salmonid species rearing and migrating in mainstem and tidal habitats of the Columbia River Estuary. As a principle implementer of restoration in the Columbia Estuary, Columbia Land Trust has conserved over four thousand acres of Columbia Estuary floodplain over the last nine years. Columbia Land Trust accomplished this by permanently securing a land base from willing land owners through fair market processes. These lands now serve as a platform from which on-the-ground restoration projects are able to be implemented. Columbia Land Trust restoration projects result in some of the greatest survival benefits for threatened and endangered salmon in the estuary (Johnson et al. 2007).

These activities would specifically satisfy some of BPA's Columbia River estuary mitigation commitments begun under the 2008 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Federal Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion (as supplemented in 2010 and 2014) (2008 BiOp) and ongoing commitments under the 2019 NMFS Columbia River System BiOp (2019 CRS BiOp). The 2008 BiOp called for identifying estuary habitat restoration projects and the 2019 CRS BiOp largely continues the estuary habitat restoration program.

Weed control, planting, and fence removal work in 2020 would improve conditions for CWTD. Target species include Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus bifrons*), Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), reed canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), tansy ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), and other priority species. Control of these species would be completed with backpack sprayers and/or vehicle-mounted boom and wand sprayers using approved methods and herbicides as outlined in the HIP. Mechanical control of appropriate species (blackberry) would also be utilized prior to follow-up chemical treatment to maximize efficacy and minimize herbicide use.

Aquatic glyphosate, imazapyr, and Hasten EA surfactant applications would be used in accordance with HIP conservation measures except where superseded by the technical memorandum approved by NMFS.

Weed control is to occur throughout 2020 as conditions permit and warrant. Weed control would target noxious weeds listed above and within the areas of the native tree plantings (spray around trees) to improve survivability of the native stock. Anticipated start date for weed control is as early as April 2020 and would span into the fall. All herbicide application techniques and quantities would be met as outlined in the HIP or superseded by the technical memorandum approved by NMFS. Planting would occur in the late winter or spring. Fence work would occur throughout the year as conditions permit.

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/ Travis D. Kessler

Travis D. Kessler
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient CRGT, Inc.

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: January 27, 2020

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: Continued funding to CLT for weed control, planting, native plant maintenance, future planting site preparation, fence removal, and fence installation on Columbia Stock Ranch; vegetation maintenance and weed control at Lower Elochoman 2; and vegetation control and planting site preparation at Lower Elochoman 3.

Project Site Description

All activities would occur within the Columbia Stock Ranch, Lower Elochoman 2, and Lower Elochoman 3 sites, which are located within the Lower Columbia River Basin.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> On January 18 th 2019, SHPO concurred that the proposed activities would not have an adverse effect to historic properties. Monitoring of fence installation would be done as requested by the Confederated Tribes of the Grande Ronde. Vegetation maintenance and control on Lower Elochoman 2 and vegetation control and planting site preparation on Lower Elochoman 3 would not have an adverse effect on historic properties.		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Although ground-disturbing activities are proposed, they would be limited to a small footprint for existing and proposed fence posts and planting or plant removal locations. Thus, the proposed activities do not have the potential to affect geology and soils.		
3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No ground-disturbing or native vegetation removal activities are proposed. Only invasive or noxious weeds would be removed mechanically or treated with herbicides.		
4. Wildlife (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No wildlife or wildlife habitat would be affected by the proposed work.		
5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There would be no impact to adjacent waterbodies or floodplains because no ground-disturbing activities are proposed in or near waterbodies or floodplains.		
6. Wetlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There would be no impact to wetlands as there are no ground-disturbing activities proposed in wetlands or waters of the U.S.		

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: No ground-disturbing activities that may affect groundwater or aquifers are proposed.

8. **Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas**



Explanation: No ground-disturbing activities that may affect land use and specially-designated areas are proposed. Access to field sites is on existing road networks and all activities are compatible with local land uses.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The proposed work would have no effect on visual quality. Any change to the viewshed would be short term and temporary.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Any increase in emissions from vehicles accessing field sites would be very minor and short term.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: The proposed work would not result in an increase in ambient noise.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: The proposed work is not considered hazardous nor does it result in any health or safety risks to the general public.

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, if necessary:

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: No notification – All work would comply with CLT agreements and easements to ensure the project is meeting the project objectives.

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

Signed: /s/ Travis D. Kessler

Date: January 27, 2020

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