

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Snag Boat Bend Floodplain Reforestation

Project No.: 2009-012-00

Project Manager: Eric Andersen, EWL-4

Location: Linn County, Oregon

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: The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to provide funding for Long Tom Watershed Council to implement the Snag Boat Bend Floodplain Reforestation Project. The project would include terrestrial vegetation management activities to increase native plant cover on 112 acres of historic floodplain forest at U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service property, William Finley National Wildlife Refuge, which is located two miles south of Peoria, Oregon. The goals of this project's proposed actions are to "protect, manage, and restore" habitat values for fish and wildlife.

The proposed action would include the following:

- Removal of non-native weeds focusing on blackberry, reed canary grass, and Canada thistle.
- Treatment of approximately 112 acres of non-native plants by herbicide applications and mechanical mowing to prepare the historic floodplain for the installation of native trees and shrubs. Herbicide would be applied from ATV, backpack crews and mowing. There would be no excavation and no fill removal in these areas.
- Maintain Vegetation – thin, approximately 14 acres of overstocked cottonwood stands planted in the 2000's. The trees to be removed would be hand fell with chainsaws, and then cut to length for the live-stake planting material. They would be loaded and moved onto a trailer for transport. The cottonwood live-stake planting material would be used for re-planting in other portions of the project area.
- Plant Vegetation - reforestation of approximately 62 acres of historic floodplain forest. After herbicide application, as described above, about 1,700 native trees and shrubs would be planted per acre in these areas. Species to be planted include black cottonwood, Willamette Valley ponderosa pine, Douglas-fir, incense cedar, Oregon ash, Big leaf maple, Oregon white oak, California black oak, cascara, Bitter cherry, Hazelnut, Oregon grape, Snowberry, Indian plum, Pacific ninebark, Douglas spiraea and Red-flowering currant.

The large cottonwood live-stakes from the thinning would be planted using an auger attachment on a skid-steer. A pilot hole would be dug with a mini-excavator in areas where gravelly soils are prone to caving into the augured planting hole. A minimal amount of material

[1-2 scoops with a $\sim\frac{1}{8}$ cubic yard (3.4 cubic feet) bucket] would be excavated and then immediately replaced around the installed cottonwood live-stake to backfill it.

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/ Shawn Skinner

Shawn Skinner
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

<u>/s/ Katey C. Grange</u>	<u>October 6, 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: Snag Boat Bend Floodplain Reforestation

Project Site Description

The William Finley National Wildlife Refuge is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The area to be reforested is currently a grass seed field that was retired from farming in 2019 and farmland that was retired from farming approximately 30 years ago and then unsuccessfully reforested by USFWS in the 2000's (19 acres). The project areas are about 500 feet from Lake Creek and 400 feet from the Willamette River. Mapped wetlands are scattered throughout the general project area, but are not within the proposed planting areas. Members of the public use the property for hiking and bird watching.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA made a determination of no adverse effect to historic properties on August 27, 2020 (OR 2020 036). Concurrence was received from the USFWS (September 2, 2020), the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (September 10, 2020), and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (September 28, 2020). BPA did not receive concurrence from any other consulting parties within 30 days.

Notes:

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

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions would have limited effect on soil and geologic values. The only digging involved in the project would be shovel planting bare root trees and shrubs, and planting large cottonwood live-stakes using an auger mounted on a skid-steer.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Federal/state special-status species in the project area. Non-native vegetation would be disturbed during project plantings, but the project goal of a restored floodplain forest would result in a long-term benefit to the plant community.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Minor Disturbance due to noise associated with ATV use, chainsaws from cotton thinning, and human presence. There are a number of bald eagles present along the Willamette River in the vicinity of the project area, but there are no known nests within the project area. If there are bird nests identified prior to mowing, the below minimization measures would be implemented. Western pond turtles are present at Snag Boat Bend but any known nest sites are outside of the project area. No ESA-listed wildlife species occur within the project area.

Notes:

- If any mowing is conducted in the ground nesting bird season (April 15-July 31) the area to be mowed would be walked by a biologist prior to mowing. Any nests observed would be avoided during mowing.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not involve any in-water work or impact to water bodies, floodplain or fish. The goal of the work is to improve rearing habitat for upper Willamette River spring Chinook salmon through the restoration of native vegetative communities.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Mowing and herbicide application to remove non-native vegetation would occur within some of the USFWS mapped wetlands, but there would be no excavation or fill removal in these areas.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not affect groundwater and aquifers. The only digging involved in the project would be shovel planting bare root trees and shrubs and planting large cottonwood live-stakes using an auger mounted on a skid-steer. Digging would be in the range of 1-3 feet in depth and would not intersect groundwater.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is owned by USFWS as part of the National Wildlife Refuge system. The project would restore the area to a more natural condition, which is consistent with the refuge's management plan. Members of the public using the property for hiking and bird watching may have periods of temporary restricted use during plantings and vegetation control.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Visual quality would be minimally impacted only during project activities, which would be a maximum of 20-30 days during the life of the project. There would be a long-term improvement in the visual quality of the area due to the restoration of a more natural condition.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The air quality impacts would be dust at a maximum of 20-30 days during the life of the project from the following equipment: 1) vehicle traffic through pick-up trucks; 2) weed control with ATV and Grass mower and 3) large cottonwood stakes would be removed with chainsaws and replanted with mini-excavator and auger attachment on a skid-steer. These short-term effects of vehicle and equipment generating dust are not inconsistent with the past agricultural practices and present restoration management of these lands.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The noise quality impacts would be intermittent at a maximum of 20-30 days during the life of the project from the following equipment: 1) vehicle traffic through pick-up trucks; 2) weed control with ATV and mower and 3) large cottonwood stakes would be removed with chainsaws and replanted with mini- excavator and auger attachment on a skid-steer. These short-term effects of vehicle and equipment noise would not be inconsistent with the past agricultural practices and present restoration management of these lands.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All workers implementing the project would follow OSHA guidelines. Visitors to the project site would be warned of project activities by signs in the parking 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

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: All work is at existing field work sites on USFWS managed public lands and are accessed on existing roads and adjacent public lands. Visitors to the project site would be warned of project activities by signs in the parking area.

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

Signed: /s/ Shawn Skinner October 6, 2020
Shawn Skinner, ECF-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist