

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: PNNL SET Installation

Project No.: 2002-077-00

Project Manager: Jason Karnezis – EWL-4

Location: Clatsop County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B 3.3 Research related to conservation of fish, wildlife, and cultural resources.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to provide funding to the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) to implement the proposed Estuary and Ocean Research Sediment Elevation Table (SET) Installation Project located on lands owned by the Port of Astoria and Columbia Land Trust in Clatsop County, Oregon.

The proposed project would involve installing a SET measurement device at two tidal wetland areas that are regularly inundated during high tide – Eagle Sanctuary Marsh and Youngs Bay Marsh. A small diameter (1/2 inch – 3/4 inch) steel rod with a pointed end would be inserted into the soil using a fence-post pounder to the point of refusal approximately three to seven meters below the ground surface. A few inches of the rod would remain above ground, and anchored by a poured concrete receiver head (measuring 6- to 10-inches in diameter and 6-inches deep). The SET devices would be installed in the wetland areas during dry periods, and would be revisited to monitor measures of surface elevation. Access to sites would be by vehicle on public roads, then researchers would walk to the the intended sites to reduce impacts.

Funding the proposed activities would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with both National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on the Operations and Maintenance of the Columbia River System, and Bonneville's 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.).

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/ Catherine Clark

Catherine Clark
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Motus Recruiting and Staffing, Inc.

Reviewed by: Chad Hamel

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange April 27, 2021

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: PNNL SET Installation

Project Site Description

The proposed projects would occur at Eagle Sanctuary Marsh and Youngs Bay Marsh. Both sites would be located in wetland areas surrounded by wetland vegetation. Both sites are within the Columbia River Estuary system.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A BPA Archeologist conducted National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 consultations with Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Shoalwater Bay Tribe, and the Confederated Tribes of the Grande Ronde (CTGR). BPA determined that the implementation would result in no historic properties affected (OR 2021 065). SHPO confirmed receipt on March 26th 2021. CTGR concurred with BPA's determination and requested standard Inadvertent Discovery Protocol on site during implementation. No additional comments were received from consulting parties; therefore, BPA assumed concurrence of our effects determination.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Soil disturbance would be minimal, limited to route into site traveled by foot, and a six to 10 inch diameter hole at the ground surface where the concrete receiver head would be placed.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: SET installation would have minimal impact to vegetation, limited to the 6- to 10-inch diameter at the ground surface. Therefore, no potential to affect plants, including Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed plants.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status wildlife species or habitat would be impacted by the proposed activities. Wildlife may be temporarily disturbed by human presence/noise during implementation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project areas are considered critical habitat for coho salmon, Chinook salmon, chum salmon, steelhead, coastal cutthroat trout, green sturgeon, and Pacific lamprey. The installation of the SET devices would occur at wetland sites during the dry period. Therefore, there would be no effect to waterbodies, floodplains, or fish.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minimal disturbance to wetlands would occur during the installation of the proposed SET devices. Researchers would install both devices during dry periods to minimize impacts of traveling by foot into the sites. Most disturbance would occur at the ground surface where a 6- to 10-inch by 6-inch concrete receiver would be installed. No wetlands would be changed as a result of the proposed project.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities are not likely to intersect with groundwater and would have no impact on aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities would not change the land use. Project sites are owned by Columbia Land Trust (a CEERP restoration sponsor) and the Port of Astoria.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Installed equipment would have minimal changes to the visual quality of the sites. Both proposed installations would result in a concrete receiver head at the ground surface with approximately 2 inches of rod sticking out of it. SETs would be minimally visible to people as vegetation would not be disturbed around the installation site.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary, small amounts of vehicle emission would be generated during travel to the implementation sites.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be short-term and temporary noise emitted during implementation and would cease following completion of the installation.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities are not considered hazardous nor would 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: 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: Researchers would work with the landowners—Columbia Land Trust (a CEERP restoration sponsor) and the Port of Astoria—to obtain access permission.

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

Signed: /s/ Catherine Clark April 27, 2021
Catherine Clark – ECF-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Motus Recruiting and Staffing, Inc.