

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: YTAHP Caribou Creek at Gibb Fish Passage Project

Project No.: 2007-398-00

Project Manager: Michelle O'Malley - EWU-4

Location: Kittitas 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) proposes to fund the Kittitas County Conservation District (KCCD), a member of the Yakima Tributary Access and Habitat Program (YTAHP) work group, to implement the Caribou at Gibb Fish Passage Project on private land near Ellensburg, Washington. Caribou Creek is utilized by Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed steelhead, Chinook and coho salmon, and a suite of native resident fishes.

The project proposes to restore year-round fish passage in Caribou Creek by consolidating three irrigation diversions located at River Miles (RM) 2.3, 3.2 and 3.4 to a single existing point of diversion at RM 3.6; installing about 1.3 miles (6,770 feet) or less of pipelines (about 855 feet of 10-inch-diameter pipeline, 2,755 feet of 12-inch-diameter pipeline, and 3,150 feet of 15-inch-diameter pipeline) to convey the irrigation water to adjacent agricultural fields, removing the three channel-spanning concrete irrigation dams, and restoring the channel at these three locations to a more natural condition. The KCCD has previously removed four fish passage barriers in the lower two miles of Caribou Creek, and the three barriers currently slated for removal are the next upstream passage barriers. The instream work areas would be isolated from flow in the channel by use of sand bags, water bladders, and floating silt curtains and the stream flow would be directed into bypass pipes. Areas outside of the stream disturbed during construction would be planted with native vegetation. All access and staging would occur via existing roads and previously disturbed areas. KCCD would implement the project during the fall and winter of 2021-2022.

These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with National Marine Fisheries 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.).

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:

/s/ Katey C. Grange December 16, 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.

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Project Site Description

The project sites are located on Caribou Creek at RM 2.3, 3.2 and 3.4 approximately 6 miles southeast of Ellensburg, Washington. Caribou Creek is a tributary to Parke Creek, which flows into Cooke Creek. The two creeks combine to form Cherry Creek, which flows into Wilson Creek. Wilson Creek is a tributary to the Yakima River at RM 147. This area is located within the Wilson Creek – Cherry Creek Subwatershed of the Upper Yakima River Subbasin. The legal description is T17N, R19E, Sec 11. The project sites and surrounding area are used for agricultural crop production and grazing.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA determined that the implementation of the proposed project would result in no historic properties affected and consulted on the determination under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act on July 29, 2021. Consulting parties included the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (Yakama Nation) and Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). DAHP concurred with BPA's determination on August 17, 2021. Yakama Nation responded requesting monitoring on August 9, 2021, but through additional discussion BPA justified that no monitoring would be necessary. The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CTCR) were notified of the proposed project by the US Army Corps of Engineers as part of Clean Water Act permitting, and requested a cultural resources inventory. BPA consulted with the CTCR on November 12, 2021. BPA did not receive a response from CTCR within the 30-day consultation period.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary impacts to soil from increased erosion potential during dam removals, regrading of the channel, and pipeline installation activities. Sediment control best management practices would be installed prior to project implementation to minimize potential for in-stream turbidity or excessive runoff during construction. Post construction planting with native vegetation would minimize long-term erosion potential.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status, including ESA-listed, plant species are known to be present. Temporary impacts to existing vegetation from equipment crushing some plants while

accessing work areas and temporary vegetation disturbance from pipeline excavation areas (about 1.3 miles; 3.1 acres). Post construction planting would re-establish areas of disturbed vegetation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status, including ESA-listed, wildlife species or habitats are known to be present. Temporary impacts to area wildlife would occur from increased noise and vehicle traffic during construction. Wildlife would likely avoid the area during this time and return once the project work is completed.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary sedimentation would be generated with instream work. KCCD obtained Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 404 authorization under NWP 27 from the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) (NWP-2021-913) to excavate and place material in Caribou Creek, and would implement all terms and conditions of NWP 27. USACE also authorized that the work complies with the Washington State Department of Ecology's Water Quality Certification (CWA Section 401) requirement for NWP 27. There would be no net rise in floodplain elevations from implementation of the project activities. The project would have an effect on fish and their habitats during in-water work. ESA-listed Middle Columbia River steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and their designated critical habitat area present in the project area. Project activities are covered under BPA's Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) Biological Opinion, HIP Project Notification Number 2021132. KCCD would follow HIP general and project-specific conservation measures to avoid and minimize impacts to fish throughout project implementation.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: None present in the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project activities do not propose new wells or use of groundwater; 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: The project activities do not propose changes to land use; designated farmlands would not be taken out of production.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor change to visual quality from dam removal, regrading the channel, and plantings. The new conditions would be visually consistent with the topography of the

existing channel and surrounding area and adjacent vegetation. Construction equipment would be visually consistent with area agricultural equipment. The project is not within a visually sensitive area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would generate small amounts of dust and vehicle emissions due to construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be short-term construction noise during daylight hours. Construction noise would not be noticeably different than the agricultural production noise.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The 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 project activities would not cause impacts to surrounding landowners. The project sponsor, KCCD, has coordinated with the underlying landowner and irrigation water users and has permission to conduct project 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 16, 2021
Brenda Aguirre, ECF-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist