

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Asotin County Spring Developments (2017-02, 2020-22)

Project No.: 1994-018-05

Project Manager: Matthew Schwartz, EWM-4

Location: Asotin 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) purposes to jointly fund Asotin County Conservation District (ACCD) along with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to develop livestock water sources on two parcels (as noted by their identification numbers, 2017-02 & 2020-22). The purpose of this work is to minimize the impacts of livestock on riparian zones.

The proposed spring developments would be implemented using a small excavator to dig out the spring in order to find an optimal collection point. A tile line (perforated pipe) would be installed to capture the water at the collection point and route it to a spring box that would also be installed. A solar pump would be installed (2017-02 only) to pump the collected water into a 700 gallon aluminum trough. A High Density Polyethylene and steel pipe would be laid above ground and buried 2-3 feet deep to connect the pump, storage tanks, and troughs. The spring development would have fencing (t-posts pounded 1-3 feet deep) installed to protect the infrastructure installed and to keep cattle off of the spring. The proposed 2017-02 spring would disturb approximately 0.1 acres of land and the proposed 2020-20 spring development would disturb approximately 1.5 acres of land.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills ongoing commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp), commitments specified in the 2020 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Columbia River System BiOp (2020 FWS CRS BiOp), 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, ECF
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Motus Recruiting and Staffing, Inc.

Reviewed by: Chad Hamel

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

<u>/s/ Katey C. Grange</u>	<u>February 24, 2021</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: Asotin County Spring Developments (2017-02, 2020-22)

Project Site Description

2017-17: private property along the east-facing toe slope of Hells Canyon near the transition from steep slopes to more gently sloping valley bottoms along the Snake River. The project is located approximately 10.5-miles southsoutheast of Asotin (upstream) and 0.8-miles upstream from the confluence of Couse Creek and the Snake River on the same side of the river. Generally, the area can be characterized as steep and rocky with sparse to moderate grasses growing on valley slopes and dense vegetation.

2020-22: private property along the northern canyon wall, 3.5 miles upstream from the confluence of Couse Creek and the Snake River on the same side as the river. The proposed spring would be about 0.4 miles from the Snake River. This area is comprised of steep and rocky terrain with grasses being the dominate vegetation type.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In coordination with BPA, NRCS assumed the role as agency lead for Section 106 consultation. NRCS determined that the implementation of these projects would result in no adverse affects to historic properties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Installation of the spring developments would cause ground disturbance, including excavation, within an approximately 1.6-acre area; erosion control measures would be implemented to minimize impacts and prevent erosion.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status species are present at the proposed project areas. Approximately 1.6 acres of vegetation would be disturbed associated with the implementation of the 2 spring development sites. Disturbed sites would be seeded and revegetated according to NRCS guidelines.

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 construction noise during implementation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The spring developments would take place in upland habitats over 250 feet from the Snake River and its tributaries. Therefore, the proposed spring developments would result in no adverse impact to these resources. There would be a long-term benefit to nearby waterbodies and associated fish, including nearby ESA-listed fish (steelhead, sockeye, fall Chinook, and bull trout), by reducing livestock intrusion in riparian areas, which would result in an improvement in water quality.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would be a benefit to wetlands due to the reduction of livestock in the riparian zone.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The spring developments would have no impact to groundwater and aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All project areas would continue to be used for livestock grazing activities. Projects would occur on private property.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Spring developments would be similar to existing structures and fields. These proposed activities would not be noticeably different from previous activities in the project areas. Already existing access roads would be used to prevent added disturbance.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary, small amounts of dust and vehicle emissions would be generated during implementation.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary construction noise would be generated during local approved daylight hours.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No known soil contamination or hazardous conditions and no adjacent CERCLA sites.

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: Asotin County Conservation District has coordinated with the landowners and would continue to work with Landowners to obtain final project agreements and access onto private property prior to project implementation.

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 February 24, 2021
Catherine Clark, ECF-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Motus Recruiting and Staffing, Inc.