

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Tepee Creek Low Tech Process-Based Restoration Project

Project No.: 1997-056-00

Project Manager: Joshua Ashline, EWU-4

Location: Klickitat 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 Yakama Nation Fisheries to complete a low tech process-based habitat restoration project along a 2-mile segment of Tepee Creek within the Yakama Nation Reservation, about 10 miles northeast of Glenwood, Washington. The work would benefit Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed Mid-Columbia Steelhead.

The project would include in-stream placement of small hand-built beaver dam analogs (BDAs), and installation of post assisted log structures (PALS) to improve stream processes in a degraded reach of Tepee Creek. BDAs are temporary, channel-spanning permeable structures constructed by hand using small posts and locally available woody material and sediment. BDAs would encourage ponding, increase floodplain connectivity and groundwater recharge, and expand wetland and riparian areas. PALS installation would include placement of wood posts into the stream bed by hand or with the use of a hydraulic post pounder. PALS would encourage debris and sediment recruitment, promote scour pools, and widen channels. PALS could be channel spanning, attached to the streambanks, or placed mid-channel. About 3 to 5 PALS in combination with BDAs would be constructed every 300 feet of stream length. The structures would accumulate wood debris and amplify natural hydrologic, geomorphic, and biological stream processes over time.

The project would be accessed on foot and via small machinery (such as ATVs) using unmaintained roads and skid paths present from past forest management activities. Vehicle staging and refueling would occur at least 150 feet from Tepee Creek. All in-channel work would occur during the approved in-water work window (typically July-October 15), or in the dry and with approval from Yakama Nation biologists. Following construction, all work areas would be returned to pre-construction conditions or better. Riparian plantings or native seed mix would be used to reestablish areas disturbed during construction and to improve the Tepee Creek riparian area and floodplain. Project implementation and adaptive management work would occur in multiple phases and for up to 10 years as restoration targets are met and self-sustaining natural processes are established.

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 and Bonneville's commitments to the Yakama Nation under the 2020 Columbia River Fish Accord Extension agreement, 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/ Claire McClory

Claire McClory
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange October 25, 2021

Katey C. Grange
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: Tepee Creek Low Tech Process-Based Restoration Project

Project Site Description

The project is located on Yakama Nation Reservation land in south central Washington. Tepee Creek is a tributary to White Creek in the Klickitat River subbasin. The project area begins at the confluence of Tepee Creek and White Creek and extends about 1.75 miles upstream. The project area has been used for commercial timber harvest and cattle grazing, which has reduced floodplain connectivity, riparian vegetation, and streamflow over time. Tepee Creek is typically dry from July-October each year.

Plant communities in the vicinity of the project generally consist of upland lodgepole and ponderosa pine, and limited woody riparian vegetation, mainly young alders, along the margins of the incised channel.

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 undertaking would result in no historic properties affected (WA 2021 092). The Yakama Nation Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) concurred on October 19, 2021.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary impact to soil from increased erosion potential during BDA and PALS installation. Work would occur in the dry to minimize potential for in-stream turbidity or excessive runoff during construction. Post construction seeding and planting would minimize long-term erosion potential.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status or ESA-listed plant species are known to be present. Temporary impact to existing vegetation during hand installation of BDAs and PALS could crush or kill riparian vegetation. Post construction seeding and planting would re-establish native riparian plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status or ESA-listed wildlife species are documented in or adjacent to the project area and no critical habitat is present. Local wildlife may be temporarily disturbed or displaced by construction noise. It is likely that species would avoid the area during construction and return once project work is complete.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Equipment access and construction activities would take place during the dry season when flows are not present. Avoidance and minimization measures would be identified in the project Sponsor's Clean Water Act Section 404 Nationwide (application number NWP-2021-870), further reducing impact to waterways.

ESA-listed fish include mid-Columbia River steelhead. Work would occur during no flow periods. The project is covered under BPA's Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) Biological Opinion under Section 7 of ESA with Project Notification Form number 2021082. The project would result in long-term improvement to fish habitat in the White Creek basin.

Notes:

- Project sponsor would adhere to all applicable site-specific conservation measures identified in the HIP consultation and approval.
- The Project sponsor would adhere to all avoidance and minimization efforts identified in the Clean Water Act permit issued for this project.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: None present.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Stream bed is likely to be dry during construction. Long term improvement to groundwater recharge potential is expected as natural stream processes improve over time.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is in a remote part of the Yakama Nation Reservation that is minimally utilized. Temporary, negligible disruption to road access and use during construction. No long-term change to land use.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is not in a visually sensitive area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in vehicle emissions and dust during construction. No long-term impacts to air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in noise during daytime construction activities due to vehicles and equipment use. No long-term impact to noise.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impact expected.

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: The project is within the bounds of the Yakama Nation Reservation. Yakama Nation Fisheries would obtain necessary approvals to conduct work on tribal property.

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

Signed: /s/ Claire McClory October 25, 2021
Claire McClory, ECF-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist