

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Shiike II Revegetation Project

Project No.: 1997-056-00

Project Manager: Jesse Wilson – EWL-4

Location: Klickitat, 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: BPA proposes to fund the Yakama Nation to plant native vegetation on 10 acres of riparian area at river mile 19 of Rock Creek, a tributary to the Klickitat River. The site is located on Yakama Nation Trust property at river mile (RM) 19. The work would provide shade and wood recruitment to address limiting habitat factors for steelhead in the Rock Creek watershed.

Plantings would include 4- to 8-inch plugs or small bare root trees and shrubs no more than 12 inches in diameter that could be planted manually with hand tools. A gas-powered hand auger could be used where necessary as the substrate is generally coarse floodplain alluvium. A total of 200 trees and shrubs would be planted including native grass, alder, dogwood, coyote willow, choke cherry, wild rose, cottonwood, and pine. Planting would take place in the late fall and early spring and would be revisited for 3 to 5 years to monitor plant survival, replant as needed, and control weeds by manual removal and mulch until the plants 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. These actions also support Bonneville's commitments to the Yakama Nation in the Columbia River Fish Accord, as amended, 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/ Carolyn Sharp

Carolyn Sharp
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

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.

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Project Site Description

Rock Creek Subbasin, within Klickitat County in southeastern Washington, is home to a population of native steelhead. The Rock Creek watershed is primarily intermittent in the lower to middle reaches of Rock Creek with many dispersed perennial pools fed by groundwater input. The primary factors and threats limiting steelhead populations in Rock Creek are low summer flows and high summer water temperatures, which likely occur naturally in some parts of the watershed because of bedrock terrain and steep slopes but are also due to anthropogenic changes in the subbasin. The Shiike II site is located directly along Rock Creek, 19 miles upstream from the Columbia River on Yakama Nation trust lands. The land surrounding the site is predominantly shrubland intermixed with grasslands used for grazing and agriculture. The project site has Rock Creek flowing through the bottom of a valley that is more vegetated with trees and shrubs than the surrounding lands but lacks adequate shading and cover.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: On November 17, 2023, BPA (WA 2020 217) initiated consultation with the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation and their Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO). On September 25, 2023, the THPO sent a letter summarizing the results of the cultural investigation conducted by the Yakama Nation Cultural Resources Program and provided a concurrence with the recommendations outlined in the report. On October 23, 2023, BPA determined that the project would result in no effect to historic properties with the avoidance measures outlined by the Yakama Nation THPO.

Notes:

- The THPO requested avoidance of three sites in the planting area. A 30-meter buffer would be identified and flagged for avoidance around the boundary of the archaeological sites prior to the initiation of revegetation. No riparian enhancement or other ground-disturbing work would be conducted within this buffered area.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some ground disturbance during planting would occur where plants are placed. Any impacts to soils as a result of the project would be short term. In the long term, there would be beneficial effects from stabilized soils due to the improved vegetative conditions.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no federally-listed or state special-status species documented in the project area. The project would have short-term effects on vegetation due to digging and human

trampling of some vegetation while working at, and accessing, work sites, but in the long term, there would be beneficial effects from restored or improved vegetative conditions.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no state-sensitive or federally-listed species or their habitats known to occur in the project area. Planting additional trees and shrubs within the riparian area would involve removing minimal existing vegetation. Some disturbance to non-listed wildlife during project activities may occur due to human presence. Any impacts would be short term. Improved habitat conditions would result in long-term positive impacts, including increased riparian plant density and diversity, and habitat structure.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change or impact to water bodies, floodplains, or fish is expected from these actions. ESA-listed steelhead are present in the project area. Planting would not impact habitat or water quality and would have no effect on these species. Planting of riparian vegetation would improve habitats for ESA-listed fish in the long term by providing shade to moderate stream temperatures, cover for protection from predation, and substrate that supports production of prey species.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands located at the project sites (USFWS National Wetlands Inventory). As a result, there would be no effects on wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no groundwater withdrawal. There would be no potential for contamination of groundwater from fuel or fluid drips or spills since no heavy equipment would be used. There would be no effect.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No project action would change the capability of the land to be used as it was prior to these actions. There would be no land use changes, and no impact to specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project activities do not propose changes to visual quality; the riparian plantings would be visually consistent with existing riparian conditions. The project area is not within a visually sensitive area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Driving of vehicles to access project sites would produce emissions, but the amount would be minimal and short term.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The only noise sources would be from humans working on the sites, and the use of vehicles to transport workers, supplies, and equipment to the project sites. All noise sources would be of low intensity and short term.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All workers would use best practices to ensure health and human safety.

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 site is located on tribal trust land and the sponsor has coordinated with the relevant Tribal departments. No other external coordination is required.

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

Signed: <u>/s/ Carolyn Sharp</u>	<u>October 30, 2023</u>
Carolyn Sharp	Date
Environmental Protection Specialist	