

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Toaheedliini Conservation Easement Acquisition

Project No.: 2010-004-00; BPA-013384

Project Manager: Anne Creason – EWL - 4

Location: Clatsop County, OR

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.25 Real property transfers for cultural resources protection, habitat preservation, and wildlife management

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA is proposing to fund a conservation easement on the Toaheedliini property, which is a 72-acre parcel of land located four miles southeast from Astoria in Clatsop County, OR. The Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce (CREST) would be completing a BPA-funded habitat restoration project at least a year after the closing on this conservation easement action. BPA would hold a conservation easement on which BPA would have rights of enforcement to permanently protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitat.

Conservation and restoration are needed in this area to enhance overall tidal marsh ecosystem function and rearing habitat for Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed juvenile salmonids. Out-migrating juvenile salmonids from the mainstem Columbia River are known to utilize floodplain and matrix habitats along Youngs Bay and the Walluski River as rearing and migrating habitats prior to traveling out to the Pacific Ocean. The reconnection and conservation of this disconnected floodplain to the Walluski River would have the opportunity to benefit several threatened and endangered salmonids.

Funding the proposed acquisition fulfills ongoing commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp) and the 2020 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Columbia River System BiOp (2020 FWS CRS BiOp).

The property consists of saltwater marsh, riparian shrub-scrub, forested wetlands, and a peripheral band/buffer of conifer forests at the toe of slope of the forested hillside. CREST would develop a land management plan to guide the protection and enhancement of habitat and other resources on the property. The land management plan would be completed by closing of the conservation easement. The management plan would be reviewed by BPA for consistency with the conservation easement and the purpose of the acquisition. If BPA proposes to fund any additional activities on the property, further environmental review may be conducted.

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.

Shawn Skinner
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Sarah T. Biegel
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 property is located along a tidal reach of the Walluski River, in Clatsop County, Oregon, approximately 1.5 river miles upstream from the confluence with Youngs River. It is a portion of privately held land along the left bank of the Walluski River, near the confluence with the Little Walluski River. The property extends from the waterward extent of the property to the 13-ft (NAVD88) contour and contains all of the area within the parcel associated with the historical tidal floodplains. The property is generally described as two locations; the north site and south site, which are connected by a narrow strip of land adjacent to the Walluski River within the easement area. Both the north and south sites are situated below the landowner's residence within the leveed floodplain. The historical tidal floodplains have been altered by a system of drainage and borrow ditches, levees, a water control structure, and historical agricultural use. Vegetation, overall habitat quality, and hydrology have changed or have been degraded as a result.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no effect due to the conservation easement acquisition. To the extent that future activities on the property may have an effect, it is expected that CREST would comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: See explanation for #1 above.

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: Notification letters would be sent to adjacent landowners and other interested parties at a minimum of 15 days before the closing date of the sale. Notice would also be posted in local newspapers and information would be posted on BPA's public website prior to closing.

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

Signed:

Shawn Skinner, ECF-4
Environmental Protection Specialist