Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: Road Creek 2 Bridge Construction

Project No.: 2007-268-00

Project Manager: Ryan Ruggiero, EWM-4

Location: Custer County, Idaho

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 Custer County Soil and Water Conservation District to replace an undersized culvert with a bridge across Road Creek, a small tributary of the East Fork Salmon River. The existing culvert backs up during high flows, overtopping and washing out the private road and introducing high amounts of sediment into the East Fork Salmon River. It is also a passage barrier at high flows for Endangered Species Act-listed Snake River spring/summer Chinook salmon, Snake River steelhead, and bull trout.

The existing culvert is located at Latitude 44.187475, Longitude -114.288500 and would be replaced with a 30-foot-long, 14-foot-wide prefabricated steel bridge supported by concrete footings. Road Creek's flows would be routed out of its channel and redirected through a pipe around the construction site to protect aquatic species and provide a dry work site. The stream course from about 40 feet upstream of the new bridge to about 50 feet downstream of the new bridge would then be permanently realigned about 7 feet north (river right) from its current centerline and reconstructed to accommodate the new bridge and provide fish passage at all flows. The project would be completed using a metal-tracked excavator (CAT 320 or similar) operating with support equipment (loader or skid steer), dewatering pumps, and human labor.

After construction, all disturbed surfaces would be seeded with native grass and forb seed with stream banks planted with native riparian shrub species. Inspection would occur annually with additional seeding or planting added if needed to ensure successful revegetation of the site.

This Proposed Action fulfills commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Columbia River System Biological Opinion and would support conservation of Endangered Species Act-listed species considered in the 2020 Endangered Species Act consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on the operation and maintenance of the Columbia River System.

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.

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Reviewed by:

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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: Road Creek 2 Bridge Construction

Project Site Description

Project actions would be located on Road Creek about 500 feet upstream of its confluence with the East Fork Salmon River and below the East Fork Salmon River Road. The proposed construction site is within a farmstead with a private residence located about 125 feet west (upstream) and ranch/farm outbuildings located both downstream and upstream between 100 and 250 feet away. Native vegetation consists primarily of grasses, sedges, cottonwoods, and willows along Road Creek, with bunchgrass and sagebrush in the sagebrush steppe vegetative type south of the creek and irrigated pasture lands north of the creek.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On February13, 2024, BPA initiated consultation with the Shoshone Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation, the Nez Perce Tribe, and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for the Road Creek 2 Bridge Project (BPA CR Project No. ID 2024 006). BPA was provided an inventory report by Sundance Consulting, Inc. that identified one previously-recorded site though no observed features or artifacts associated with this site were found in the proposed construction area. No new historic properties were identified within the area that could potentially be affected and BPA determined that the implementation of the proposed undertaking would result in no historic properties affected.

No response was received from SHPO, the Shoshone Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation, or the Nez Perce Tribe during the 30-day regulatory response period, thus concurrence was presumed, and consultation completed.

2. Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be temporary displacement and compaction impacts to soil from the operation of heavy equipment needed for this action, and an increased erosion potential during construction activities. Sediment control BMPs would be installed prior to project implementation to minimize potential for in-stream turbidity or excessive runoff during construction. The entire work area would be contoured appropriate to the surrounding floodplain following construction, hydroseeded, and planted with native riparian species to facilitate soil recovery.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status plants, including Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed species, are present. There would be temporary impacts to existing vegetation during construction activities. Post construction plantings and long-term monitoring (with replacement plantings as needed) would re-establish native riparian plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status wildlife species or habitats are within the project site. No habitats would be modified to any degree that might permanently displace resident wildlife, though some may be temporarily displaced by disturbance from construction activities. Human presence and activity associated with construction would temporarily disturb and displace nearby wildlife, but long-term displacement resulting in competition for nearby habitats is unlikely.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed Snake River spring/summer Chinook salmon, Snake River steelhead, and bull trout are present in the project area. The project was reviewed and consulted on under the HIP Biological Opinion under Section 7 of the ESA. The project sponsor would adhere to all applicable site-specific conservation measures identified in the HIP consultation and approval, including turbidity monitoring requirements and in-water work timing. No state-listed special-status species occupy the project area.

The project would require the redirection of stream flows away from the construction area through a pipe during construction to effectively de-water the construction site. This de-watering would be done following fish capture ("fish salvage") and relocation of captured fish to free-flowing portions of the stream. HIP conservation measures would be followed to herd fish downstream from the channel as it dewaters. Fish salvage involves electro-shocking, capture, and handling of fish during their relocating. This is stressful on individual fish, but less so than stranding them without water if fish salvage and relocation were not to be conducted.

The new bridge and stream course would then be constructed primarily "in the dry" with no construction disturbance to fish or fish habitat until completion when the stream would be rerouted into its relocated and reconstructed channel.

Some aquatic invertebrates and amphibians may be displaced or killed by mechanical activities at the site and where the stream would be dewatered, but quick re-occupation of this small site by the same or other members of the same classes of animals following construction is anticipated. In the long term, the project would benefit aquatic species.

A Clean Water Act Nationwide Permit 27 (NWS-2020-724) would be obtained to ensure the project meets national water quality standards.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present in the project area. There would be no effect.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no groundwater withdrawal. There would be some miniscule potential for contamination of groundwater from fuel or fluid drips or spills from the equipment used for culvert replacement, but spills and drips with the volume necessary to contaminate groundwater is unlikely.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not change the capability of the land to be used as it was prior to project actions. There would be no land use changes, and no impact to specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No visually prominent vegetative, landform, or structural change would be made. Culvert removal and bridge construction would not change the visual character of the landscape along, or as seen from, local roads.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be some exhaust and greenhouse gas emissions from the motorized equipment used for bridge construction, but these are short-term actions, and no long-term source of emissions or exhaust would be created. Vehicles used to transport workers, supplies, and equipment to the site would be another potential source of exhaust and greenhouse gasses, but this also would be minimal and short term.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be some short-term noise impacts from the heavy equipment used for bridge construction, but this type of noise is consistent with that of common ranching and haying operations in this farmstead and the local area.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Vehicle and excavator operation and working with hand and power tools have their attendant risks to equipment operators, but there would be no condition created from this action that would introduce new human health or safety hazards or risk into the environment. No condition created by this action would increase the burden on the local health, safety, and emergency-response infrastructure.

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

Explanation: The actions proposed have been planned in cooperation with private landowner, whose residence is nearby. The action would proceed following notification of the affected landowner who authorized the restoration project actions.

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

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