

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Chiwawa Area G Habitat Restoration Project

Project No.: 2009-003-00

Project Manager: Tori Bohlen, EWU-4

Location: Chelan County, WA

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 Yakama Nation Fisheries (YNF) to implement an instream habitat restoration project on a 0.5-mile-long segment of Chiwawa River in the Wenatchee River watershed on federal property. The project seeks to restore adult spawning and juvenile rearing habitat for Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed Upper Columbia River (UCR) spring Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), UCR summer steelhead (*O. mykiss*) and Columbia River bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*).

The project proposes to construct two apex large wood structures within the river that include greater than 35% of the bank full width and six partially-buried stream bank structures. Additionally, within the project area, 15 standing trees would be pulled into the river to provide cover and hydraulic complexity. These project elements would result in retention of mobile native wood and alluvial material and locally initiate lateral migration, erosion and tree recruitment.

The project would use approximately 194 logs with rootwads and 66 logs without rootwads, which would be used for pilings, to construct the large wood structures. During construction, the partially buried structures would be isolated from flow in the channel using bulk-bag or sheet-pile cofferdams. Fish and aquatic species would be salvaged from the isolated work areas and translocated downstream of the in-stream work areas. Heavy equipment such as excavators, off-road dump trucks, marooka's and a winch-driven cable tree puller would be used to complete construction as designed.

Access and staging would occur via existing roads and previously disturbed areas and short temporary access routes to reach proposed wood structure sites. Vegetation removed during construction would be salvaged and used to supplement the large wood structures. All areas disturbed during construction would be planted with native vegetation. In addition, planted areas would be monitored and replanted or reseeded the following year to ensure extent of plant cover and success of plant survivability. Project implementation would occur during the summer of 2024 with instream work occurring during the in-water work period of July 1 - 31.

Funding the proposed activities would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System. These activities would also support ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the Federal Columbia

River Power System 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.

Brenda Aguirre
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.

Proposed Action: Chiwawa Area G Habitat Restoration Project

Project Site Description

The project area is located in a rural area along the Chiwawa River, approximately 30 miles north of Leavenworth, Washington. The project would occur on Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest (OWNF) managed lands. The OWNF Grouse Creek Campground is approximately 0.5 miles northeast of the project area. Vegetation types and land use in the project area consist of riparian forest stands interspersed with areas of scrub/shrub lands. Adjacent properties are agricultural use (forestry) and recreation (camp ground). Recreation within the Chiwawa River is classified as low with occasion fishing. The project area has been heavily manipulated by historic agricultural use, which has depleted the riparian area and river of large wood.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: OWNF conducted a cultural resource survey and consultations with the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (YN) and Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CTCR). No cultural resources or historic properties were identified or recorded as a result of the survey or consultations. DAHP and CTCR concurred with OWNF's determination that the project would have no effect with a stipulation for a monitor to be onsite during construction. No response or comments were received from the YN. Consultation was complete on February 27, 2024.

Notes:

- An archaeological monitor would be onsite during construction, during ground disturbing activities.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction of temporary access routes, installation of cofferdams, placement of large wood, excavation of bank materials and pulling standing trees down to implement project elements would disturb soils. Erosion control BMPs would be installed prior to project implementation to minimize potential for in-stream turbidity or excessive runoff during construction. All excavated soils would remain onsite and be used as fill material within the large wood structures. Post construction site restoration measures would further minimize erosion potential, and provide long-term stability to soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal or state special-status plant species or habitats are known to be present in the project area. Existing vegetation would be selectively removed during construction, and areas disturbed as a result of construction of temporary access and areas near excavation of banks for placement of large wood structures would be planted with native vegetation suitable for the project area, resulting in long term benefit to the riparian vegetation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) and its designated critical habitat are present in the project area. Potential impacts to the northern spotted owl or their habitat during project activities would be minimized by following the measures outlined in U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) Aquatic Restoration Activities in the States of Oregon and Washington and portions of California, Idaho and Nevada (ARBO II Programmatic) ESA Section 7 consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Any impacts to non-listed wildlife species in the project area would be limited to the immediate project area, where there would be a temporary, small decrease in available habitat and temporary elevated noise disturbance.

Notes:

- YNF and its contractor would adhere to all conservation measures described in the ARBO II Programmatic consultation to minimize impacts to northern spotted owl and its critical habitat.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed UCR spring Chinook salmon, UCR summer steelhead and Columbia River bull trout are present within the project stream reach. No separately listed state fish species have been recorded in the project area. While project activities are scheduled to take place during the in-water work window and outside of spawning season, there is the potential that some listed fish would be present in the stream reach during the proposed construction period. Potential impacts to ESA-listed fish species during project activities would be minimized by following the measures outlined in the USFS's ARBO II Programmatic ESA Section 7 consultation with the NMFS. The proposed restoration actions would aid in floodplain re-connection, increase local water table, and improve instream complexity for fish habitat. Despite the short-term effects on fish in the area, the long-term effects of the project on fish, floodplains, and water bodies would be positive.

Notes:

- YNF and its contractor would adhere to all conservation measures described in the ARBO II Programmatic consultation to minimize impacts to ESA-listed fish species.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands present in the proposed project area. Therefore, there would be no impact to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Placement of the large wood structures in the channel and along the stream banks may result in minor impacts to groundwater by encouraging greater amounts of water onto the floodplain during high flows. The long-term increase in floodplain access would benefit groundwater recharge and function.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would result in temporary impacts to recreational users due to access limitations during construction in the immediate project area, sharing the local road (USFS Road 62) with vehicles transporting workers and equipment to and from the project area and closure of the nearby Grouse Creek Camp Ground for about 4 weeks. There are other recreational opportunities in the area to serve as alternatives during the temporary impacts. No long-term change in land use or recreation would occur. No specially-designated areas are present.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would have little to no effect on visual quality. The new wood structures would be visually consistent with adjacent vegetation and would not be located in a visually sensitive area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minor increases in local air pollution during project activities due to exhaust from machinery and equipment. These effects would be limited in scope and duration and cause no long-term impacts to air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would result in temporary increases in noise generated by machinery and equipment used during project activities. To avoid potential impacts to recreational campers, Grouse Creek Camp Ground would be closed for about 4 weeks. These effects would be limited in scope and duration and cause no long-term impacts to the area's level of noise quality.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All personnel would use best management practices to ensure human health and safety. Solely licensed and trained professionals would operate all machinery. Temporary signage denoting no public access and danger construction zone would be used to deter people from entering the project site. Additionally, while falling trees along the river, lookouts with hand held two-way radios would be posted to ensure public 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 project site and staging area are located on OWNF managed lands. OWNF participated with the YNF in the project development.

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

Signed:

Brenda Aguirre
Environmental Protection Specialist