

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Coyote Creek Fence Removal

**Project No.:** 2011-004-00

**Project Manager:** Virginia Preiss – EWM-4

**Location:** Lane County, Oregon

**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 Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to remove approximately 2,000 total feet (600 total meters) of fencing on the Coyote Creek property in Lane County, Oregon. Funding for this project partially fulfills commitments made by BPA in the 2010 “Willamette River Basin Memorandum of Agreement Regarding Wildlife Habitat Protection and Enhancement between the State of Oregon and the Bonneville Power Administration” and is part of ongoing efforts to mitigate for the impacts to fish and wildlife from the construction and operation of the Federal flood control and hydroelectric facilities in the Willamette River Basin.

ODFW would remove two segments of cattle fencing to improve conditions for wildlife on the property. The first segment consists of an about 1,400-foot-long (440 meters) line of fencing which bisects 65-acres of upland prairie. The second is a separate about 480-foot-long (147-meters) segment with an attached 33-foot by 33-foot (10-meter-by-10-meter) wooden corral that runs along the border of the prairie and a forested hill in the southwestern corner of the property. The fencing is a combination of two-strand barbed wire and woven smooth wire attached to metal and wooden T-posts. ODFW would remove the wire by hand, after which they would use a small backhoe and skid steer to remove the fence posts. All work would be conducted when the ground is dry to reduce impacts to local soil. The removed wire and fence posts would be transported off the property and disposed of at a local waste facility. Access would be along existing paved and gravel access roads.

**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.

Thomas DeLorenzo  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

FOR 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.

**Proposed Action:** Coyote Creek Fence Removal

## **Project Site Description**

The Coyote Creek property is part of ODFW's Fern Ridge Wildlife Area, a network of more than a dozen individual properties surrounding the Fern Ridge Reservoir. The wildlife area is located directly east of Eugene, Oregon and provides ample habitat for migratory waterfowl and seasonal recreation for local residents. As with much of the central Willamette Valley, the property was extensively impacted by agriculture and ranching activity throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Since purchasing the property, ODFW has sought to restore the historical Willamette Valley prairie that would have been present prior to anthropogenic modification of the area to provide habitat for ESA-listed species like Kincaid's lupine (*Lupinus oregonus*), Fender's blue butterfly (*Icaricia icarioides fender*), and streaked horned lark (*Eremphila alpestris strigata*).

## **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A BPA archaeologist reviewed the proposed fence removal and determined that the actions would have no adverse effect on historic and cultural resources (BPA CR No. 2024 219). BPA initiated consultation with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians on August 24, 2024. SHPO confirmed receipt of the consultation on August 28, 2024. No other responses were received. The consultation period ended on September 25, 2024.

Notes:

- All vehicles would be rubber tracked to minimize ground disturbance.
- A professional archaeologist would be onsite to monitor fence removal within the site to ensure fence posts are being removed vertically and observe if archaeological materials are disturbed by this action. A monitoring report would be produced for distribution to the above listed consulting parties.

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Removing the fence posts would disturb the ground. ODFW would minimize the effects of this disturbance by avoiding work when the ground is wet and removing the fence posts vertically using machinery. No large-scale excavation would be required, and removing fence posts would be the only actions which would require ground disturbance. Because of the relatively small size of the fence posts, overall effects on the geology and soils would be minor and highly localized.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed Kincaid's lupine has been documented in Lane County (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) tool). ODFW has surveyed the properties of the Fern Ridge Wildlife Area and has identified the locations of populations of Kincaid's lupine. None of these populations are present near the fencing. There would be no effect on Kincaid's lupine as a result.

No separately-listed Oregon state species of concern are present in the project area (Oregon Department of Agriculture).

Effects on non-listed plants would be minimal. While there is some grass along the path of the fence, the effects on this vegetation would be limited to some individual plants being trampled by workers and machinery. These effects would be highly localized and have mild impacts on the overall vegetation in the area. Effects on vegetation would therefore be low.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphys marmoratus*), streaked horned lark, northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*), and Fender's blue butterfly have the potential to be found in Lane County (IPaC). Of these species, only streaked horned lark has been observed on the Coyote Creek properties. Streaked horned lark prefer to nest in upland prairie similar to that found on the Coyote Creek property. ODFW regularly surveys the property for lark nests, and none have been recorded in the area near the fencing. Project actions would also occur outside of the nesting season for lark, which is typically concluded by mid-August. As a result, it is highly unlikely that there would be any streaked horned lark in the area and the fencing removal would have no effect on the species.

No separately-listed Oregon state species of concern are present in the project area (ODFW Fish and Wildlife Division).

Effects on non-listed wildlife would be limited to mild disruption from noise and human presence during removal of the fence. These effects would be short in duration and localized to the area in which the fencing sits. The long term-effects on local wildlife would be positive by removing passage barriers that cross the local prairie.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All fencing is located in upland areas. The nearest water body, Coyote Creek, is more than 115 meters away from the fence at its closest point. There would be no effect on fish, floodplains, and water bodies.

### 6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No fencing segment crosses into mapped wetlands (USFWS National Wetlands Inventory). There would be no effect on wetlands.

## 7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or groundwater use are proposed. There would be no effect on groundwater and aquifers.

## 8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The Coyote Creek property is owned by ODFW and is maintained for wildlife habitat. The property is not currently open for public use. No changes to ownership or use are proposed.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Removal of the fence would alter the current visual quality of the area, but the effect would be mild and restore the aesthetics of the property to a more historically natural condition.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Machinery used for the removal of the fence would produce exhaust. While this would negatively affect local air quality, the duration would be short and limited in scope. Overall impacts to local air quality would be very mild.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Machinery used for the removal of the fence would produce noise. The duration of this noise would be short and limited in scope. Overall impacts to local noise levels would be very mild.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All personnel would use best practices to ensure human health and safety. All machinery would be operated solely by trained and licensed personnel.

### **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 Coyote Creek property is owned and maintained by ODFW. BPA holds a conservation easement on the property. No other landowner coordination would be required.

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

Signed:

Thomas DeLorenzo  
Environmental Protection Specialist