

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Oak Basin Conservation Easement Acquisition and Stewardship Funding

**Project No.:** 2011-003-00; BPA-014254

**Project Manager:** Matt Schwartz – EWM-4

**Location:** Linn County, Oregon

**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 Greenbelt Land Trust (GLT) to purchase a conservation easement on the Oak Basin property, which is two separate units of land totaling about 428 acres located approximately 4.5 miles south of Brownsville in Linn County, Oregon. GLT would hold a conservation easement over the property, over which BPA would have third party rights of enforcement to permanently protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitat. BPA would also provide stewardship funds toward land management and maintenance of the property to GLT.

This land purchase would specifically satisfy some of BPA's commitments made 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".

The property consists of approximately 428 acres of a mosaic of grasslands, oak woodland, conifer, and mixed forest habitats which supports Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed species (including Kincaid's lupine and Fender's blue butterfly) and numerous Oregon Conservation Strategy (OCS) species. GLT has developed a land management plan to guide the protection and enhancement of habitat and other resources on the property. The land management plan has been 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.

Israel Duran  
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:** Oak Basin Property Acquisition and Stewardship Funding

### **Project Site Description**

The 428 acre Oak Basin property, located approximately 4.5 miles south of Brownsville in Linn County, Oregon, is privately owned. The property consists of a mosaic of grasslands, oak woodland, conifer, and mixed forest habitats which supports ESA-listed Fender's blue butterfly (*Icaricia icarioides fenderi*) and, Kincaid's lupine (*Lupinus oregonus*); and OCS species such as chipping sparrow (*Spizella passerine*), white-breasted nuthatch (*Sitta carolinensis aculeate*), willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii*), olive-sided flycatcher (*Contopus cooperi*), western bluebird (*Sialia mexicana*), and western gray squirrel (*Sciurus griseus*). Other important species include, but are not limited to, elk, Columbian black-tailed deer, American black bear, cougar, red fox, coyote, wild turkey, grouse, and quail. Two spring-fed ponds and several unnamed streams are also present.

The property is within a Priority Oak and Prairie Conservation Unit identified within the Lower Calapooia-Santiam Conservation Strategy produced by the Lower Calapooia-Santiam Planning Partnership. It also provides travel corridors for wildlife and plant species movement into adjacent public lands and between other key protected lands within the larger regional ecological context, including: (1) proximity to other BPA-funded acquisitions under the Memorandum of Agreement such as Courtney Creek (BPA Tract ID WILWF-WL-40) and C-Bow (BPA Tract ID WILWF-WL-66), and (2) proximity to Coburg Ridge (managed by The Nature Conservancy) and Flying Wyrms (managed by the McKenzie River Trust), a Wetlands Reserve Program conservation easement managed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and several thousand acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) forest lands and the BLM Oak Basin Prairies Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

### **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 land acquisition which includes the creation of a conservation easement. To the extent that future activities on the property may have an effect, it is expected that the Greenbelt Land Trust 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 will be sent to adjacent landowners and other interested parties at a minimum of 15 days before the closing date of the sale. Advertisements will also be posted in local newspapers, and information will 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:

Israel Duran, ECF-4  
Environmental Protection Specialist