

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Mill Road Levee Maintenance

Project No.: 2010-073-00

Project Manager: Jason Karnezis, EWL - 4

Location: Wahkiakum County, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Columbia Land Trust (CLT) to restore the design elevation of the Mill Road setback levee on county-owned land in Wahkiakum County, Washington. The project aims to restore the design elevation of the levee to provide adjacent land protection.

The Grays River Mill Road restoration project was completed in 2012 with funding from BPA. The project restored tidal connectivity to approximately 50 acres of floodplain in the lower Grays River by removing a section of levee along the Grays River shoreline, excavating a tidal channel, re-establishing floodplain vegetation, and rebuilding the county-owned Mill Road to function as a setback levee. The design elevation to protect adjacent properties was approximately 13 feet. Post construction monitoring and maintenance was completed to address the anticipated settlement of the road. Once the primary settlement was determined to be completed, the final road surface was installed, and the road was transferred back to the county. Since the completion of the project, a portion of the road has continued to settle, up to 18 inches, so that at its worst point the elevation is approximately 11.5 feet. This has resulted in high water going over the road and increasing the flood control risk to neighboring properties.

The project proposes to raise the settled area of the road back to design elevation working entirely within the existing road prism using imported fill material and installing approximately 1400 feet of new travel surface, either asphalt or chip-seal. All work would occur within the existing road/levee prism and access would be from the road/levee.

Funding the proposed activities supports 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.

Shawn Skinner
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: Mill Road Levee Maintenance

Project Site Description

Mill Road is a county-owned road in Rosburg, Washington and runs adjacent to the Grays River. The road is built upon a levee that is bound by freshwater forested/shrub wetland on both sides. The project site is within the road prism and above the ordinary high-water line.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA made a determination of no historic properties effected on October 22, 2024 (WA 2024 284). BPA consulted with the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation, Chinook Indian Nation, Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, and the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). Concurrence was received from DAHP (October 22, 2024). BPA did not receive concurrence from any other consulting parties within 30 days.

Notes:

- In the event any archaeological material is encountered during project activities, work would be stopped immediately and a BPA Archaeologist and Historian would be notified, as well as consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minimal effects on geology and soils from project actions. The planned levee maintenance activity and all staging areas would occur within the pre-existing, established road footprint.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/State special-status plant species are known to be present. Minor disturbance may occur to vegetation during construction, but the project actions would take place in previously disturbed areas with little vegetation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No federal/state special-status wildlife species are known to be present. Minor, short-term disturbance to local wildlife would occur due to noise associated with construction and human presence.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The Grays River runs along the northern edge of Mill Road. ESA-listed Chinook, chum, coho, and steelhead are present in the river. No project actions would take place in or near the river. All work would occur between any high tides and silt fencing or coir logs would be installed at the toe of the slope to prevent sediment from reaching the river. There would be no effects on fish and waterbodies as a result of the project actions.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are wetlands mapped along the bank of Mill Road. All work would occur between any high tides and silt fencing or coir logs would be installed at the toe of the slope to prevent sediment from reaching any adjacent wetlands. Project actions would not take place in these wetlands and would therefore have no effect on these wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed actions have no potential to impact groundwater.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be some lane closures during construction while maintaining a level of access for neighbors and emergency and mail services. Roadway demarcation carsonite markers would be used for safety. Land use would return to normal upon completion of the project.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some changes in vegetation and the associated visual quality from the levee maintenance would occur in the immediate project area, but these changes are consistent with existing visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Any increase in emissions from vehicles accessing the project site would be very minor and short term.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be some noise impacts from the heavy equipment used for construction, but this would be very minor and short term.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All applicable safety regulations would be followed during work activities.

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: Mill Road is owned by the county of Wahkiakum, WA and CLT would coordinate all project actions with the county. CLT has also reached out notifying the adjacent landowner and has coordinated with the Grays River Flood Control District about the project.

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

Signed:

Shawn Skinner
Environmental Protection Specialist