

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Chahalpam Replanting 2025/2026

Project No.: 2009-012-00

Project Manager: Allan Whiting, EWL – 4

Location: Marion County, OR

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 Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde (CTGR) to implement vegetation replanting at the Chahalpam property; a Tribally-owned land held in fee in Marion County, Oregon.

To restore these areas and improve floodplain forest habitat, native riparian vegetation would be purchased. Vegetation would be purchased to meet a high density Rapid Riparian Revegetation (R3) planting strategy at 2,800 stems per acre with a 3:1 shrub to tree ratio in a uniformed design. Approximately 44.6 acres are proposed for planting, totaling a need of 124,880 stems. Species would include Oregon ash, red alder, black cottonwood, big leaf maple, western red cedar, snowberry, vine maple, hazel, mock orange, ninebark, red osier dogwood, and cascara. Emphasis of replanting would be on bare root and plug seedlings with some containerized seedlings used. Short stature grasses such as slender hairgrass would be purchased in seed form along with native forbs to provide a grass/forb layer component. Approximately three pounds per acre would be planted by drill seeding or hand-broadcast for a total seed need of 134 pounds. The project area may be revisited in subsequent years to adaptively manage vegetation through replanting consistent with the type of vegetation planted during the original effort.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills commitments under the 2008 National Marine Fisheries Service Willamette River Biological Opinion, while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the FCRPS 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.¹

Shawn Skinner
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

¹ BPA is aware of the November 12, 2024, decision in *Marin Audubon Society v. Federal Aviation Administration*, No. 23-1067 (D.C. Cir. Nov. 12, 2024). To the extent that a court may conclude that the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA are not judicially enforceable or binding on this agency action, BPA has nonetheless elected to follow those regulations at 40 Code Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) §§ 1500– 1508, in addition to the US Department of Energy’s NEPA implementing procedures at 10 C.F.R. Part § 1021, to meet the agency’s obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 *et seq.*

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: Chahalpam Replanting 2025/2026

Project Site Description

The project is located on Chahalpam, a 462-acre conservation parcel located near Stayton, OR along the North Santiam River. The property contains portions of floodplain forests along both banks of the river and the property encompasses more than a mile of river frontage. A total of 44.6 acres of agricultural land would be restored to floodplain forest.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA made a determination of no historic properties effected on December 31, 2024 (OR 2025 010). BPA consulted with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde (CTGR), the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz. BPA received concurrence from the SHPO (January 23, 2025) and an email from CTGR asking for BPA to include additional information in the cultural resources survey report regarding a 2019 survey (January 27, 2025). 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: The proposed actions would have limited effect on soil and geologic resources. Both drill seeding and track and tire disturbance would occur throughout the project area; but generally only a few inches in depth. The minor disturbance would be balanced through the proposed action goal of a restored floodplain forest.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no known Federal/state special-status plant species in the project area. Disturbance of plants in the project area would largely occur to non-native plants. There would be a long-term benefit by restoring the project area to a more natural condition by replanting with native plants.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, short-term disturbance would occur to wildlife species in the area from noise associated with the planting effort. Western pond turtles (Oregon-listed Sensitive species) are found within Chahalpam, but would not be effected by this project because they only occur outside of the project area. The goal of the work is to improve riparian and floodplain habitat for the benefit of terrestrial and aquatic species. There are no other known Federal/state special-status wildlife species in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not involve any in-water work or impact to water bodies or fish. The goal of the work is to improve riparian and floodplain habitat for the benefit of terrestrial and aquatic species, including Upper Willamette River Chinook salmon and steelhead.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not be changing the hydrology within the project area, only planting native vegetation. The wetlands in the project area would be enhanced and restored by this project. Disturbance of the wetlands is for the purpose of planting native plant species. Any potential wetland impacts would be limited and temporary. There would be a long-term benefit by restoring the project area to a more natural condition.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not affect groundwater and aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions would not impact or change land use.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some changes in vegetation and the associated visual quality would occur in the immediate project area, but the changes would be returning the area to a more natural state and would be consistent with the visual quality of the surrounding area and/or native plant habitat. There would be a long-term improvement in the visual quality of the area due to the restoration of a more native plant and animal habitat condition.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Any increase in emissions from vehicles accessing field sites would be very minor and short term.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, short-term increase in ambient noise during use of vehicles and equipment.

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: The entire project area is owned and managed by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. The project would not occur on any land owned by additional landowners.

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