

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Elmira Land Acquisition

**Project No.:** 1992-061-00

**Project Manager:** Elizabeth Santana– EWM-4

**Location:** Boundary County, ID

**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:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is proposing to fund the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI) to purchase the Elmira property, a 278-acre parcel of land located roughly 15 miles northeast of Sandpoint, Idaho in Boundary County. BPA would hold a conservation easement to permanently protect, mitigate, and enhance fish and wildlife and their habitat.

Funding the purchase of the property would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System, while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for the effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System on fish and wildlife in the mainstem of the Columbia River and its tributaries pursuant to the Pacific Northwest Electric Power and Planning and Conservation Act of 1980 (the Northwest Power Act) (16 U.S.C. 839 et seq.).

The Elmira property consists of upland forested hills bisected by Sand Creed and its riparian corridor. KTOI would incorporate the property into its portfolio of mitigation areas in northwestern Idaho. Management of these properties focuses on improving conditions for resident ESA-listed grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) and bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*). KTOI would develop a land management plan to guide the protection and enhancement of habitat and other resources on the property. The land management plan would be drafted within 18 months of closing. The management plan would be 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.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas DeLorenzo  
Environmental Policy Analyst

Concur:

Katey C. Grange  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

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<sup>1</sup> BPA is aware that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), on February 25, 2025, issued an interim final rule to remove its NEPA implementing regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500–1508. Based on CEQ guidance, and to promote completion of its NEPA review in a timely manner and without delay, in this CX BPA is voluntarily relying on the CEQ regulations, in addition to DOE's own regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021, to meet its 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:** Elmira Property Acquisition

## **Project Site Description**

The Elmira property is a 278-acre parcel of land located in rural Boundary County, Idaho. The property consists of rolling hillsides dominated by upland forests of Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and ponderosa pine (*Psiloscops flammeolus*). Sand Creek, an important spawning and rearing stream for local bull trout, bisects the property. Sand Creek is ESA-listed critical habitat for bull trout. Additionally, the property supports extensive foraging and winter denning habitat for local grizzly bear and black bear (*Ursus americanus*), as well as grazing for a variety of ungulate species. The property is bordered to the north and northwest by state-owned lands, to the south and east by federally owned lands, and sits within the Grouse Mountain Grizzly Bear Management Unit.

## **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 transfer of title and the creation of a conservation easement. To the extent that future activities on the property may have an effect, it is expected that the KTOI 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: Prior to closing, notice of the acquisition would be mailed to nearby landowners and interested parties, and BPA would run advertisements in local area newspapers for at least two weeks to inform the public of the pending acquisition.

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

Signed:

Thomas DeLorenzo – EC-4  
Environmental Policy Analyst