

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Tenmile Creek RM 1.1 and 3.2 PALS Project

Project No.: 1994-018-05

Project Manager: Tabatha Rood – EWM-4

Location: Asotin County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B 1.20 Protection of cultural resources, fish and wildlife habitat.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Asotin County Conservation District in the installation of Post-Assisted Log Structures (PALS) and riparian planting in Tenmile Creek.

PALS would be installed along Tenmile Creek between river miles (RM) 1.1 to 3.2. This project is broken up into three project areas (PA). PA 65 starts at a bridge crossing on Weissenfels Road at RM 1.1 and goes upstream to RM 1.9 with the road paralleling the stream on the eastern side of the valley. This section of channel is straightened, has a coarse bed comprised of cobble and boulders, goes dry or has extremely low flows, has little geomorphic diversity, and much of the existing floodplain pockets are disconnected or constrained by the road. PA 66 is a wide alluvial valley that is from RM 1.9 to 2.3. This section of channel is dominated by sediment deposition, braiding, and coarse substrate. PA 67 is a straightened channel where the valley becomes confined from RM 2.3 to 3.2 with a steep gradient, coarse bed materials, and occasional floodplain pockets.

PALS installation would consist of untreated wooden posts that would be inserted into the stream bed using a hand-held pneumatic post-pounder. Installing 120 structures, each structure would consist of approximately 4 to 25 posts depending on the width of the stream at the installation locations, plus the addition of several pieces of woody debris that would be woven in between the posts by hand. Posts would penetrate roughly 2 to 3 feet into the stream bed at each structure. Chainsaws, handsaws, sledgehammers, shovels, and drills may also be used in the installation of the PALS. A 4-wheeler would be used to access the site via pre-existing roads and two-tracks and to stage natural materials at designated staging areas or along existing roadways near creek.

Site restoration measures would include seeding and planting of native riparian vegetation at disturbed areas. Planting would consist of hydro-seeding, drill seeding, harrowing, or by hand.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills ongoing commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp). These proposed activities also fulfill commitments specified in the 2020 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Columbia River System BiOp (2020 FWS CRS BiOp).

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.

/s/ Catherine Clark

Catherine Clark

Contract Environmental Protection Specialist

Motus Recruiting and Staffing, Inc.

Reviewed by: Chad Hamel

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel

Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

August 13, 2020

Sarah T. Biegel

Date

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: Tenmile Creek RM 1.1 and 3.2 PALS Project

Project Site Description

The Tenmile Creek project areas would be located along Tenmile Creek between RM 1.1 and 3.2. The project areas are dominated by course substrate and disconnected channel. Located in Sections 02, 11, 14 of Township 09N, Range 46E. Vegetation in the project areas is comprised of dense stands of young alder with pockets of cottonwood, willow, and other native shrubs. Riparian areas are either narrow or are dominated by upland plants due to lack of overbank flow and low water table. Project areas are all privately-owned land.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA determined that the implementation of the proposed project would result in no historic properties affected (WA 2020 056). BPA notified consulting parties on July 5, 2020. The SHPO concurred with BPA's determination on July 7, 2020. No additional responses from consulting parties were received within 30 days.

Notes:

- In the event that archeological or historic materials are discovered during project activities, work in the immediate vicinity must stop, the area be secured, and the concerned tribe's cultural staff and cultural committee and DAHP notified.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The installation of the PALS would temporarily disturb soils on the project site. Best Management Practices (BMP) have been developed to avoid or minimize temporary fine sediment impacts during construction. All ground disturbance would be stabilized and native seeding and planting would occur post-construction.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed or special-status plant species are known to exist on the site. Areas that are disturbed would be revegetated with native plant species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status or ESA-listed wildlife species or habitat would be negatively impacted by the installation of the PALS. Wildlife may be temporarily disturbed and displaced by construction noise during implementation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is covered under the Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) Biological Opinion (BiOp) under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (HIP #2020090). Listed fish species include Snake River Basin steelhead and bull trout and their critical habitat. The project plans were reviewed by BPA engineering technical services and a series of conservation measures in accordance with the HIP consultation would be implemented to ensure that the project would benefit ESA-listed fish species.

Project work would occur in low to no flow conditions along the creek bed; therefore, no impact to non-ESA-listed fish species or to the waterbody would occur. In the long term, this project was designed to increase fish habitat complexity.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands located in the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground-disturbing activities are not likely to intersect with groundwater and would have no impact on aquifers. Construction BMPs would be implemented to prevent contamination of groundwater from equipment leaks or spills.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is located on private property. No changes to land use would occur.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor changes to visual quality. The new post-assisted log structures would be visually consistent with adjacent vegetation and topography of the proposed structures would not be located in a visually sensitive area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in emissions and dust from vehicles accessing the site during construction activities.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in ambient noise during construction. Any noise emitted from construction equipment would be short term and temporary during daylight hours and would cease following project completion.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities are not considered hazardous nor would result in any health and safety risks to the general public.

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 land owner has been in coordination and signed an agreement with Asotin County Conservation District staff.

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

Signed: /s/ Catherine Clark August 13, 2020
Catherine Clark, ECF Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Motus Recruiting and Staffing, Inc.