Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: Lemhii Hydroseeding and Invasive Weed Treatment

Project No.: 2010-072-00

Project Manager: Tim Ludington, EWM-4

Location: Lemhi County, Idaho

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 the Sate of Idahos' Upper Salmon Basin Watershed Project to hydroseed and treat invasive plants in recently completed restoration project sites in the Lemhi River Valley. Funding the proposed activities fulfills ongoing commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp). These actions would also support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System and Bonneville's commitments to the State of Idaho under the 2020 Columbia River Fish Accord Extension agreement, 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.).

The project sites to be treated are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Sites to be seeded and planted:

Project Name	Total Acres	Riparian Acres	Upland Acres	Latitude	Longitude
L8A Fish Screen and Pipeline	3.7	3.7	0	45.114639	-113.7355
Playfair Irrigation	1.0	0.2	0.8	44.848362	-113.619520
Little Sawmill Bridge project	0.3	0.1	0.2	44.848848	-113.619931
L-10 Fish Screen, Headgate, Bypass	12.0	12.0	0	45.104630	-113.738304
Canyon Crk-02 Fish Scrn, Headgate, Bypass	2.5	2.5	0	44.691164	-113.359601
Canyon Crk Habitat Enhancement Project	1.3	1.3	0	44.691099	-113.358938
Eighteenmile Creek (Breshears)	8.0	8.0	0	44.637999	-113.291953
Hayden Creek Hermits Phase 1	0.1	.02	0.1	44.796346	-113.698058
L-21 Fish Screen, Headgate, Bypass	2.3	2.3	0	45.141614	-113.676620
L-26 Fish Screen, Headgate, Bypass	1.4	1.4	0	45.009307	-113.656895
L-27 Fish Screen, Headgate, Bypass	1.8	1.8	0	44.993298	-113.653070
L-28 Fish Screen, Headgate, Bypass	2.7	2.7	0	44.987546	-113.649798

Revegetation would be accomplished at sites in the table above using hydroseeding, seeding, bare-root planting, and planting of containerized plants native and appropriate to riparian and upland habitats in this watershed. Bare-root and containerized planting requires the digging of holes (shovels or hand-held augurs) for placement of new plants. Hydro seeding and seeding

would apply a seed/mulch slurry, or just seed, on the ground surface with no ground disturbance. A truck-mounted hydro seeder would be used to apply hydroseed slurry.

Invasive plants would be spot-treated in the spring and summer by hand-pulling and backpack spraying of herbicides in riparian areas where individual invasive plants, or clusters of such plants, have been found. No broad-scale application of herbicide is proposed. All herbicide would be applied in accordance with the product's label instructions and the conservation measures in the NMFS and USFWS Biological Opinions for Bonneville's Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) ESA consultaiton.

Table 2. Sites where invasive plants would be treated:

Project Name	Total Acres	Riparian Acres	Upland Acres	Latitude	Longitude
L-10 Fish Screen, Headgate, Bypass	12.00	2.70	9.30	45.104534	-113.737786
Eagle Valley Ranch Sr1	37.2	10.60	26.60	45.102480	-113.729664
Eagle Valley Ranch Sr3	11.50	1.76	9.74	45.112478	-113.752202
Canyon Crk-02 Fish Scrn, Headgate, Bypass	2.50	2.50	0.00	44.697584	-113.333785
Canyon Crk-03 Fish Scrn, Headgate, Bypass	0.16	0.16	0.00	44.700319	-113.312744
Hawley Creek L-Hac-03 Fish Screen	0.56	0.16	0.40	44.661227	-113.202551
L-61 Fish Screen, Headgate, Bypass, Culvert	3.36	2.12	1.24	44.715871	-113.404521
Big Springs 5 Fish Screen	29.80	3.40	26.40	44.708127	-113.405238
Confluence Project and Staging Area	62.50	5.20	57.40	44.729150	-113.434027
Fayle Project	23.80	2.30	21.50	44. 699644	-113.372193
L-58c Fish Screen and Bypass	1.15	1.15	0.00	44. 730375	-113.434681
LBSC-05 Fish Screen and Bypass	1.60	1.60	0.00	44. 711159	-113.410713
Beyeler Ranch Upper Lemhi Enhancement	10.00	6.00	4.00	44. 692593	-113.367647
Eighteenmile Creek Restoration	11.65	10.65	1.00	44.676624	-113.337942
Middle Eighteenmile Creek (Breshears)	13.21	1.81	11.40	44.638240	-113.292141
Middle Eighteenmile Creek (Ellsworth)	12.10	3.60	8.50	44.642860	-113.294780
Eighteenmile Bridge At Oxbow Ranch	0.32	0.12	0.20	44.598085	-113.263446
L3AO	1.36	0.86	0.50	44.160784	-113.832842
Big Timber 2 Diversion	0.10	0.00	0.10	44.687418	-113.369989
Mabey Lane Side Channel	1.94	1.50	0.44	44.941746	-113.641497
Henry Fork 1 and 2	5.86	5.86	0.00	44.899642	-113.627132
Upper Henry Project	8.38	3.77	4.61	44.897983	-113.627121
Perreau	0.53	0.53	0.00	45.098302	-113.941371
Upper Pratt 2 Fish Screen and Pipeline	0.15	0.00	0.15	45.097914	-113.653884
Upper Pratt 3 Fish Screen and Pipeline	0.40	0.00	0.40	45.104200	-113.649308
Upper Pratt Creek Lower Pipe and Screen	0.66	0.00	0.66	45.097500	-113.654345
Upper Pratt Creek Upper Pipeline	0.73	0.00	0.73	45.101585	-113.652320
L-15 Fish Screen and Bypass	1.40	1.40	0.00	45.080194	-113.718429
L-16/17 Fish Screen and Bypass	1.10	1.10	0.00	45.070419	-113.705449
Little Sawmill Creek Restoration	1.59	1.59	0.00	45.848122	-113.620943
Wellard Irrigation 1 and 2	0.14	0.05	0.09	45.114639	-113.753550

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/ Robert W Shull
Robert W Shull
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
CorSource Technology Group

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel
Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange *March 9, 2021*
Katey C. Grange 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: Lemhi Fencing, Planting, and Weed Treatment

Project Site Description

Project actions would be located in the Lemhi River Valley - a broad valley composed of alluvium, fan, and valley fill deposits from the surrounding mountains. This valley is characterized by irrigated agricultural fields within a sagebrush steppe ecosystem. Native vegetation consists primarily of grasses and sagebrush in the upland sagebrush steppe, with cottonwoods, willows, cattails, and sedges in the riparian areas. Land use in the area is primarily agriculture (alfalfa and grass hay production).

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No heavy equipment operations (e.g., bulldozers, excavators) are proposed, so there would be no major soil disturbance with potential to affect cultural reosurces. Planting of containerized plants would displace soil in specific sites, but such actions have little potential to affect cultural resources based on surveys of the project sites.

All project sites and actions were the subject of cultural resource surveys and consultation with Idaho SHPO and relevant tribes at the time of the original projects from which these actions arise. All actions were determined to have "no advese effect" or that there would be "no historic properties affected."

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No heavy equipment operations (e.g., bulldozers, excavators) would be used, so there would be no large-scale soil displacement, soil mixing, or other mechanical soil disturbance.

Herbicide impacts to biological components of soils would be minimized by application according to manufacturer's labels and compliance with HIP conservation measures.

Planting of containerized plants would disturb soil only in small planting sites with no large scale soil disturbance.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed, or "special-status" plant species are present in these locations. All herbicide application is proposed using backpack sprayer with minimal potential for drift or runoff to non-target vegetation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status wildlife species or habitats are within the project sites.

The herbicide treatments are small, spot-treatments of individuals or clusters of target plants that would be highly localized and thus would not substantially impact any one animal's home range.

No plants identified for herbicide treatment are used preferentially for habitat purposes by native species. Some animals may be exposed to applied herbicides through contact with, or ingestion of, treated vegetation, but application would be according to label restrictions, which would be too low of toxicity to be of harm.

Wildlife may be disturbed and displaced by human presence during the weed treatment and planting actions, but long-term displacement resulting in competition for nearby habitats is unlikely.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No action proposed here would physically alter aquatic habitats; there would be no adverse physical changes to water bodies, floodplains, or fish from these actions.

Herbicide application would be according to label restrictions, which would minimize potential for chemicals to reach water bodies.

ESA-listed fish species are present in the project area (Snake River Spring/Summer Chinook, Snake River Basin Steelhead, and bull trout). Planting would not impact habitat or water quality, and would have no effect on these species. Herbicide applications have a very low risk of affecting fish habitat/water quality since they would be applied according to label requirements and HIP conservation measures. Short-term advese effects, if any, would be discountable. Planting of riparian vegetation would improve habitats for ESA-listed fish in the long term by providing shade to moderate stream temperatures, cover for protection from predation, and substrate that supports production of prey species (insects, etc.).

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Workers would likely walk through wetlands, but no other wetlands disturbance would occur. Wetland habitats would be planted with native species around their edges, but the wetlands themselves would be left intact. Herbicide would be applied as spot treatments only, with limited or no potential to reach wetlands since they would be applied according to label instructions (as is required).

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no groundwater withdrawal. There would be no potential for contamination of groundwater from fuel or fluid drips or spills since no heavy equipment is

being used. Herbicide would be applied as spot treatments only, with limited or no potential to reach groundwater if applied according to label instructions (as is required).

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No project action would change the capability of the land to be used as it was prior to these actions. There would be no land use changes, and no impact to specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The existing condition in planting sites is primarily bare soils, and vegetation planting would restore desired visual characteristics. Visual intrusion by a planting crew or the hydroseeder would be short-term.

The existing condition of weed treatment sites would be varied, as these are small spots where individual plants or clusters of plants have been found. Some sites may be vegetated, some barren; some visible from roads, some not. The killing of these individual plants or small plant clusters may produce unsightly dead plants visible in the foreground in some areas for a season, but would not substantially alter the visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Driving of vehicles to access project sites would produce emissions, but the amount would be minimal and short-term. Hand spraying of herbicide would not produce elevated spray drift that might be carried by air currents to adversely affect localized short-term air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The only noise sources would be from humans working on the sites, and the use of vehicles to transport workers, supplies, and equipment to the project sites. All noise sources are of low intensity and short-term.

Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No long-term public safety hazards would be created with this project. Routine, short-term, safety hazards would be expected from the incremental addition of truck traffic on local roads, and the operation of the hydroseeder. Application of herbicides would be according to manufacturer's labels and the HIP conservation measures, thereby minimizing risk to human health and safety.

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: Plantings and herbicide application on private lands would proceed following notification of the affected land owners. Land owners who authorized the prior restoration project actions on their lands are already aware of, and anticipate, the proposed fencing, planting, and weed treatments.

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

Signed: */s/ Robert W Shull* *March 9, 2021*

Robert W Shull Date

Contract Environmental Protection Specialist

CorSource Technology Group