

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Asotin County Projects (2020-24, 2020-26)

Project No.: 1994-018-05

Project Manager: Matthew Schwartz, EWM-4

Location: Asotin County, Washington

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) purposes to fund Asotin County Conservation District (ACCD) to develop a livestock water source and windbreak on two parcels (as noted by their identification numbers, 2020-24, 2020-26). The purpose of this work is to minimize the impacts of livestock on riparian zones and reduce wind-related soil erosion and sediment transport.

(2020-24) The proposed well development would include a water well, buried water lines, a water trough, and water storage tank. One water well would be installed using heavy equipment with approximately 530 feet of 1 ¼ inch-diameter water pipeline that would be buried 3 feet deep. The depth of the well would be between 150 and 450 feet. The cattle trough would be accompanied by a 3,000 to 5,000 gallon capacity water storage tank. All of the well development components would result in approximately 1 acre of ground disturbance.

(2020-26) The proposed windbreak would include laying fabric mulch, planting trees, installing irrigation piping, and protection fencing. The fabric mulch would have the edges buried 4 to 6 inches deep to improve its longevity and all plants would be planted with hand tools no deeper than 1 foot. The fence line would be installed to protect plantings from livestock with T-posts that would be installed between 1 and 3 feet deep, and brace posts would be installed in holes approximately 3 feet deep and 1 foot wide. The irrigation pipe would be buried approximately 3 feet deep. All of the windbreak development components would result in approximately 2 acres of ground disturbance.

Funding the proposed activities would support conservation of Endangered Species Act-listed species considered in the 2020 Endangered Species Act consultations with both the National Marine Fisheries Service and the US Fish and Wildlife Service on the operation and maintenance of the Columbia River System, and Bonneville's 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.

/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:

<u>/s/ Katey C. Grange</u>	<u>May 6, 2021</u>
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: Asotin County Projects (2020-24, 2020-26)

Project Site Description

Well development property (2020-24): private property, rangeland, dominated by upland grasses and small shrubs throughout. The proposed well would be located south of Peola Road in Asotin County on a plateau above McGuirre Gulch. The well development would take place in an upland habitat approximately 400 ft from tributaries leading to the Asotin Creek

Wind break development property (2020-26): private property, farmland, dominated by upland grasses and small shrubs throughout located on a plateau above Asotin Creek and the Lower Snake River.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A BPA Archeologist conducted National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 consultations with Washington State Department of Archeology and Historic Presentation (WA DAHP), the Nez Perce Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla, and the Confederated Tribes of the Yakama Nation. BPA determined that the implementation would result in no historic properties affected (WA 2021 055 & WA 2021 056). Nez Perce THPO concurred with BPA's determination on March 4th, 2021. Recognizing that DAHP only concurred with APE, BPA submitted a second determination letter. DAHP concurred with BPA's determination on April 26th, 2021. No comments were received from any of the consulting parties; therefore, BPA assumed concurrence with our effect determination.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: (2020-24) Installation of the well would disturb approximately 1 acre of soil; erosion control measures would be implemented to minimize soil from traveling offsite.
(2020-26) Installaion of the windbreak components would disturb approximately 2 acres of soil; tree planting and mulch mat would help control erosion to minimize soil from traveling offsite.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status species are present at any of the proposed project areas. Approximately 1 acre of vegetation would be disturbed associated with the water development site. Disturbed sites would be seeded and revegetated according to NRCS

guidelines. Approximately 300 to 450 bareroot trees would be planted to create the windbreak.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status wildlife species or habitat would be impacted by the proposed activities. Wildlife may be temporarily disturbed 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 windbreak activities would occur upland of all water bodies and floodplains in the area. Therefore, the proposed project would result in no impact to these resources.

The well development would take place in an upland habitat approximately 400 ft from tributaries leading to the Asotin Creek. All project activities would occur away from the river and no other waterbodies are in the project areas. Therefore, the proposed project would result in no adverse impact to these resources. There would be long-term benefit to nearby waterbodies and associated fish, including nearby ESA-listed fish (steelhead, sockeye, fall Chinook, and bull trout), by reducing livestock intrusion in riparian areas, which would result in an improvement in water quality.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands would be disturbed by any of the proposed activities.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The windbreak would have no impact to groundwater and aquifers.

The well development would not exceed more than 5,000 gallons a day. The state of Washington has determined that withdrawal of groundwater does not require a permit for stock-watering as long as that withdrawal is less than 5,000 gallons a day. In this case the well would not exceed that. The landowner would follow all state mandated guidelines for well operations. Based on this, the proposed well would not be likely to impact groundwater or aquifers in this area.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project areas would continue to be used for livestock grazing activities. Project would occur on private property.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The windbreak would add tree vegetation in a primarily grass dominated area. This activity would not negatively impact the visual quality of the area. The well development

would be similar to existing structures to adjacent properties. This proposed activity would not be noticeably different from previous activities in the project area. Already existing access roads would be used to prevent added disturbance.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary, small amounts of dust and vehicle emissions would be generated during implementation.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in ambient noise during implementation. Any noise emitted from 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: No known soil contamination or hazardous conditions and no adjacent CERCLA sites.

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: Asotin County Conservation District has coordinated with the landowners and would continue to work with Landowners to obtain final project agreements and access onto private property prior to project implementation.

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 May 6, 2021
Catherine Clark – ECF-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Motus Recruiting and Staffing, Inc.