

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Road Creek Fencing and Planting Project

Project No.: 2007-268-00

Project Manager: Tim Ludington, EWM-4

Location: Custer 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 Custer Soil and Water Conservation District to install riparian-protective fencing and to plant willow and cottonwood along Road Creek, a small tributary of the East Fork Salmon River, at Latitude 44.186914, Longitude -114.287567.

Cottonwood and willow cuttings would be planted along Road Creek and jack fencing (fencing constructed of logs with no post-hole digging) would be constructed along both sides of the creek to protect the plantings from big game and livestock browsing. Grasses and forbs would also be seeded through the project area.

This Proposed Action fulfills commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Columbia River System Biological Opinion and would support conservation of Endangered Species Act-listed species considered in the 2020 Endangered Species Act consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on the operation and maintenance of the Columbia River System.

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/ Sarah T. Biegel October 26, 2021

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: Road Creek Fencing and Planting Project

Project Site Description

Project actions would be located just above the confluence of Road Creek and the East Fork Salmon River, along a denuded stretch of stream adjacent to a farmer's work yard. The site is surrounded by buildings and fenced livestock yards in a narrow valley 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 riparian areas up and downstream from the project site. 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 digging of holes or disturbance of soils or vegetation are proposed so there would be no effect to cultural resources.

2. Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No digging of holes or disturbance of soils or vegetation are proposed so there would be no effect on soils.

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 this location. No digging of holes or disturbance of soils or vegetation are proposed so there would be only minimal impacts to vegetation from disturbance caused by foot traffic and the handling, movement, and placement of fence poles. Vegetative planting and protective fencing would improve riparian vegetation long term.

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 area. Also, the project site is within an area of high human activity where vegetated habitat is lacking, so wildlife use of the area is minimal and limited to song birds and small mammals. There would be disturbance impacts from human activity, and the few animals that use this

area may be displaced by even more human presence during the fencing and planting actions. However, willow and cottonwood plantings, once established, would provide nesting and foraging habitat for more birds and small animals than are able to use the site in its current condition.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change or impact to water bodies, floodplains, or fish from these actions.

ESA-listed fish species are present in the project area (Snake River spring/summer Chinook, Snake River Basin steelhead, and bull trout). Fencing actions and planting would not impact habitat or water quality, and would have no effect on these species. 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: No wetlands are present in the project area. There would be no effect.

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 would be used. There would be no effect.

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. The project site is within a farmer's work area where the proposed jack fence and developing riparian trees and shrubs would improve the scenic value of the site as seen from the nearby East Fork Road.

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.

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.

12. 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 handling of poles for fence construction.

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 actions proposed are on private land and would proceed following notification of the affected land owner who authorized the restoration project actions and would participate in the proposed fencing and planting.

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 October 26, 2021
Robert W Shull Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
CorSource Technology Group