

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Crocker Creek Culvert Replacement

**Project No.:** 1996-077-02

**Project Manager:** Jenny Lord, EWM-4

**Location:** Idaho 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:** BPA proposes to fund the Nez Pece Tribe to replace an undersized culvert on Crocker Creek, a tributary of Lolo Creek approximately one mile east of Glenwood, Idaho. The existing culvert is causing upstream head-cutting, channel incision both upstream and downstream, and is a barrier to passage of Endangered Species Act-listed Snake River steelhead. The existing culvert would be replaced with an open-bottom arch pipe culvert, with natural-functioning stream channel features beneath the arch. The new open-bottomed culvert would be 12 feet wide, 5 feet high, and 42 feet long.

Crocker Creek would be diverted around the construction site to reduce potential impacts to fish. Rerouting the flow would require the installation of cofferdams and a diversion pump. Fish would be captured and relocated from the construction site prior to that site being drained to allow for construction. The project would be completed using a metal-tracked excavator (CAT 320 or similar) operating with support equipment (loader or skid steer), dewatering pumps, and human labor.

After construction, Crocker Creek would be redirected back into its original, but now reconstructed channel immediately above the culvert and allowed to flow through the simulated stream channel under the new culvert and through a 40-foot reconstructed stretch of channel below the new culvert. All disturbed surfaces would be replanted with native seed and live plants. Inspection and maintenance of the project site would occur annually, and could include minor on-site adjustments to streambank or channel bed conditions within, above, and below the culvert as needed to maintain project success, and additional vegetation plantings if needed.

This Proposed Action fulfills commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) Columbia River System Biological Opinion and would support 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/ 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                      May 16, 2022

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:** Crocker Creek Culvert Replacement

## **Project Site Description**

The project area reach of Crocker Creek is located within agricultural lands used primarily for livestock pasture and hay production. Riparian vegetation is confined to the stream corridor and inset floodplain. Outside of the stream and inset floodplain, the vegetation is primarily made up of natural grasses and hay meadow with nearby stands of conifer forest in various successional stages.

## **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA consulted with the Nez Perce Tribe and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on the effects of the project based on a 33 acre intensive survey conducted by the Nez Perce Tribe Cultural Resource Program. Though a site near the project site was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, BPA determined, and the Nez Perce Tribe and Idaho SHPO concurred, that the proposed culvert replacement work would not alter the character-defining features of the site and thus have no adverse effect on the feature. Additionally, all culvert replacement work would be monitored by a qualified cultural resources monitor.

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minor, temporary, impacts to soil from increased erosion potential during construction activities. Sediment control BMPs would be installed prior to project implementation to minimize potential for in-stream turbidity or excessive runoff during construction. Work area would be isolated by rerouting water around the work area to minimize erosion and turbidity.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status plants, including Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed species, are known to be present. There would be temporary impacts to existing vegetation from heavy equipment excavation for culvert replacement and 40 feet of stream channel reconstruction below the culvert); Post construction plantings and long-term monitoring would re-establish native upland and riparian plant communities.

#### **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 site. No habitats would be modified to any degree that might permanently displace resident wildlife, though some may be temporarily displaced by disturbance from construction activities. Human presence and activity associated with construction would temporarily disturb and displace nearby wildlife, 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: ESA-listed Snake River steelhead are present in the project area. The project is covered under the HIP Biological Opinion under Section 7 of the ESA with Project Notification Form number 2022024. The project sponsor would adhere to all applicable site-specific conservation measures identified in the HIP consultation and approval, including turbidity monitoring requirements and in-water work timing. No state-listed special-status species occupy the project area.

Culvert replacement would occur at low flows and would require diversion of the creek by pumping and piping the creek flow around the construction site. Fish removal would be completed via electrofishing before work within the stream channel begins. Electrofishing is stressful on fish and potentially harmful, but the number of fish affected would be few and from only a small area of the stream.

Some aquatic invertebrates and amphibians may be displaced or killed by the culvert installation at the inlet and outlet of the culvert, but quick re-occupation of these small sites by the same or other members of the same classes of animals following construction is anticipated.

A Clean Water Act Nationwide Permit 27 (NWS-2020-724) was obtained to ensure the project meets national water quality standards.

#### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present in the project area.

#### **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no groundwater withdrawal. There would be some miniscule potential for contamination of groundwater from fuel or fluid drips or spills from the equipment used for culvert replacement, but spills and drips with the volume necessary to contaminate groundwater is unlikely. Onsite spill kits would also minimize the potential for spills and drips to be of sufficient quantity to contaminate groundwater.

## 8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Explanation: The project would not change the capability of the land to be used as it was prior to project actions. There would be no land use changes, and no impact to specially-designated areas.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No visually-prominent vegetative, landform, or structural change would be made. Culvert replacement would not change the overall visual character of the landscape along, or as seen from, local roads.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be some exhaust and greenhouse gas emissions from the motorized equipment used for culvert replacement, but these are short-term actions, and no long-term source of emissions or exhaust is created. Vehicles used to transport workers, supplies, and equipment to the site would be another potential source of exhaust and greenhouse gasses, but this also would be minimal and short-term.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be some short-term noise impacts from the heavy equipment used for the culvert replacements, but this type of noise is not inconsistent with that of common logging, ranching, or farming operations in the local area.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Vehicle and excavator operation, and working with hand and power tools have their attendant risks to equipment operators, but there would be no condition created from this action that would introduce new human health or safety hazards or risk into the environment. No condition created by this action would increase the burden on the local health, safety, and emergency-response infrastructure.

### **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 Crocker Creek culvert replacement is on a private road and designed in cooperation with the private land owner, who would be notified prior to construction activities.

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 May 16, 2022  
Robert W. Shull Date  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
CorSource Technology Group