

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Lookingglass Creek Geotechnical Investigation

**Project No.:** 1996-083-00

**Project Manager:** Tracy Hauser – EWL-4

**Location:** Union County, Oregon

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B3.1 Site characterization and environmental monitoring

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is proposing to fund the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) to conduct habitat restoration activities in the floodplain and channel of Lookingglass Creek in northeastern Oregon. To inform project designs and future restoration actions, CTUIR would conduct geotechnical investigation of the proposed project area. These actions support BPA's commitments to CTUIR in the Columbia River Fish Accord, as amended, while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System (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. 839 et seq.).

CTUIR would drill 12 geotechnical bores in the proposed project area. 11 of the bores would be located in the historical floodplain of Lookingglass Creek and the local uplands, and 1 bore would be located at the proposed site for a relocated bridge which crosses the stream near the eastern edge of the property. The bores would be drilled using a truck-mounted mechanical drill and provide insight into the composition of local soils as well as current groundwater conditions. Bores would be roughly 3 feet in diameter and be drilled deep enough to reach groundwater to measure the local water table. Access to the property is along established public roads to the property and private roads owned and maintained by CTUIR on the property, with some limited overland travel required to reach drilling sites once on the property.

This geotechnical investigation would inform the designs for fish and wildlife restoration projects in this section of the Lookingglass Creek floodplain in future years.

**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.

Thomas DeLorenzo  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange  
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:** Lookingglass Creek Geotechnical Investigation

## **Project Site Description**

Lookingglass Creek is a minor tributary to the Grande Ronde River located in northern Union County, Oregon. The area in which the geotechnical investigation would take place is roughly 4 miles upstream from the confluence of the two rivers, approximately 12.5 miles north of the town of Elgin, Oregon. This portion of Lookingglass Creek was channelized in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century by the local landowners to open the historical floodplain for agriculture. This channelization has resulted in a highly incised channel in the local reach, which has reduced the quality of spawning and rearing habitat available for local salmonids. The area surrounding this portion of Lookingglass Creek was purchased by CTUIR with BPA funding in 2016 for the purpose of restoring the area to the historical conditions present before the creek was modified.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: CTUIR conducted a field survey of the proposed boring locations to determine whether there are any historic or cultural resources present. A BPA archeologist reviewed the survey report and conducted background research into the proposed drilling locations. BPA determined that the proposed geotechnical borings would result in no historic properties affected (BPA CR Project No. OR 2022 081). BPA initiated consultation with CTUIR, the Nez Perce Tribe, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on March 27, 2024. SHPO concurred with BPA's determination on April 25, 2024. No other responses were received. The consultation period ended on April 28, 2024.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Drilling the geotechnical bores would require ground disturbance. Drilling would displace the soil in and around the bore. The width of these bores would be no more than 3 feet. This soil removed during excavation would be retained nearby and used to refill the holes following completion of site characterization to restore the area to the current conditions. This ground disturbance would be highly localized and cause no significant impacts on geology and soils in the overall project area. Other ground disturbance, such as from vehicles and human presence, would be shallow and limited to light disturbance of the topmost layers of soil and cause no significant impacts to the geology and soils in the overall project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed plant species present in the project area (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) tool). Geotechnical investigation would therefore have no effect on listed plant species. No Oregon state-listed plant species are typically found in Union County in the habitats in which the proposed action would take place (Oregon Department of Agriculture).

There would be negligible effects on non-listed plant species. Due to the highly incised nature of the channel, much of the historical floodplain of Lookingglass Creek lacks extensive riparian vegetation. The boring locations are limited to grassy areas without complex vegetation. While this grass would be disturbed, and small areas of it removed, the wider effects on vegetation in the project area would be negligible.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed grey wolf (*Canis Lupus*) has the potential to appear in and near the project area (IPaC). While grey wolves have been observed occasionally in Union County, they typically avoid areas with regular human presence and noise. Because of nearby local residences and roads, it is highly unlikely that there would be any wolves in the project area, and as a result, project actions would have no effect on grey wolves. No separately listed Oregon state-listed animal species are typically found in Union County in the habitats in which the proposed action would take place (Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) Wildlife Division).

Non-listed wildlife in the project area would be temporarily disturbed by the noise and human presence caused by project actions. This disturbance would be limited in scope and cause no lasting impacts to local wildlife.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), and steelhead salmon (*O. mykiss*) are found in Lookingglass Creek (IPaC, StreamNet Mapper). Lookingglass Creek is listed critical habitat for bull trout (IPaC). No geotechnical investigation would take place in the stream or on its banks and as a result there would be no effect on these species. No separately listed Oregon state-listed fish species are present in Lookingglass Creek (ODFW Wildlife Division).

There would be no effect on non-listed fish species in Lookingglass Creek, as no geotechnical investigation would take place in or near the stream.

### 6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are mapped wetlands along the banks of Lookingglass Creek in the western portion of the project area (USFWS National Wetlands Inventory). No geotechnical bores would be drilled in these wetlands. There would therefore be no effects on wetlands.

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or groundwater use are proposed. Geotechnical bores would expose some groundwater in order to measure the local water table in the project area. This exposure would be limited duration and the bores would be refilled following completion of the geotechnical site characterization. There would be no long-term effects to local groundwater.

## **8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The area surrounding this reach of Lookingglass Creek is owned by CTUIR and maintained for fish and wildlife habitat. This use would not change because of project actions.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no changes to the visual quality of the area as a result of geotechnical borings. All bores would be refilled following completion of the geotechnical site characterization to restore the area to the current visual quality.

## **10. Air Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Machinery and vehicles used for drilling the geotechnical bores would produce exhaust. These effects would be limited in scope and duration and cause no long-term impacts to air quality in the area.

## **11. Noise**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Machinery and vehicles used for drilling the geotechnical bores would produce noise. These effects would be limited in scope and duration and cause no long-term noise in the area.

## **12. Human Health and Safety**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All personnel would use best management practices to ensure human health and safety. All machinery would be operated solely by trained and licensed personnel.

### **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: CTUIR owns the project area surrounding this portion of Lookingglass Creek. BPA holds a conservation easement on the property. Access would be along public roads. No outside coordination would be required.

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

Signed:

Thomas DeLorenzo  
Environmental Protection Specialist