

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Kelly Creek Project Area 45 Instream Habitat Restoration Project

Project No.: 1994-018-05

Project Manager: Jennifer Lord, EWU

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; B3.2 Aviation activities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Asotin County Conservation District (ACCD) in the implementation of the Kelly Creek PA-45 Instream Habitat Restoration Project. This project would implement a low-tech process-based restoration strategy to address steelhead recovery objectives identified in the Asotin County Conceptual Restoration Plan for Kelly Creek, river miles 0 to 1.4.

ACCD would hand build post-assisted log structures (PALS), beaver dam analogues (BDA) structures, post vanes, and boulder reconfiguration within the stream channel to reinitiate natural stream processes. Variations of PALS structures would include bank-attached PALS on the river-right bank, bank-attached PALS on the river-left bank, mid-channel PALS, which would be centered in the channel, and channel spanning PALS. BDAs would be channel spanning and are proposed at seven locations along Kelly Creek. Boulder reconfiguration is proposed at three locations along Kelly Creek.

PALS installation would consist of untreated wooden posts that would be inserted into the stream bed using a hand-held pneumatic post-pounder. Installing approximately 100 structures, each structure would consist of approximately 4 to 15 posts depending on width of the stream at the installation locations, plus the addition of several pieces of woody debris that would be woven in between the posts by hand. Posts would penetrate roughly 2 to 3 feet into the stream bed at each structure. Chainsaws, handsaws, sledgehammers, shovels, and drills may also be used in the installation of the structures. A 4-wheeler would be used to access the site via pre-existing roads and two-tracks, and to access staged materials near the creek.

BDA structures would be permeable, channel-spanning with a constant crest elevation, and constructed with a mixture of assorted cobbles and sediments that would be sourced from the floodplain within 10 yards of the BDA structure locations. Materials would be sourced using hand tools and placed by hand in the stream which would promote ponding within the low-flow channels. Structures would be varied in size based on their location, with the amount of fill used being less than 0.25 cubic yards per structure.

Post vanes would be constructed similar to PALS but would not have woody materials incorporated into the untreated posts. A line of non-treated wood posts would be driven into the stream bed at an acute angle of approximately 18 degrees from the stream bank. The height of the posts closest to the bank would be trimmed to the bankfull elevation expected during bank erosion (no more than 18 inch height). Each subsequent post would be trimmed linearly down to the most upstream post which would remain a few inches above the streambed. Post vanes would be built in sequence with PALS structures on alternating banks to create a meander pattern.

Boulder reconfiguration would consist of small boulders and rocks from the stream and adjacent floodplain. Boulders and rocks would be manipulated by hand and basic hand tools to reincorporate them into the stream channel in accordance with project designs to increase floodplain complexity. The amount of rock manipulated in each boulder structure would vary but remain under 2.4 cubic yards for all boulder structures.

ACCD would contract a helicopter to stage natural materials closer to the project area. The helicopter would drop large bundles of woody-materials directly into predetermined staging areas close to the construction sites. The woody materials needed for the PALS and BDA structures would be sourced from the region, primarily from forest-thinning projects within Asotin County. Access lanes and staging areas may be cleared of dry or dead standing weeds or vegetation using mowers or brush cutters to mitigate the fire potential. No soil disturbance or scalping would occur during vegetation management.

Equipment would include a hand-held pneumatic post-pounder and a generator to power it, chainsaw, handsaws, sledgehammers, shovels, and rock bars. An ATV would be used for accessing staging areas and moving materials near the stream channel, with access from a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife trail adjacent to the stream channel.

Post-construction, ACCD would return to the site during Spring or Fall months to conduct riparian vegetation planting of native plants. All planting would occur around the stream channel using shovels, planting bar, and brush cutters. An ATV would be used to stage planting materials on site with access provided by the trail adjacent to the stream.

These activities would support conservation on ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River Power System 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.).

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.

Catherine Clark
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange FOR Sarah T. Biegel
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: Kelly Creek Project Area 45 Instream Habitat Restoration Project

Project Site Description

The project site is located south of the city of Asotin, WA, accessible by Dwight Halsey Road, and an ATV trail which runs from a large parking area near the headwaters of Kelly Creek. Kelly Creek is located within the George Creek Wildlife Area Unit, within the Asotin Creek Wildlife Area managed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). This unit has pockets of high-quality shrub steppe and steep rocky canyons with riparian areas. The project area's vegetation is primarily made up of deciduous trees and shrubs with limited established riparian vegetation.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA determined that the implementation of the proposed undertaking would result in no adverse effect to historic properties. BPA consulted with the Washington Department of Historic Preservation (DAHP), Nez Perce Tribe (NPT), WDFW, and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) on November 24, 2023. DAHP concurred with BPA's determination on November 27, 2023. No additional responses were received from the consulting parties.

Notes:

- Determination is dependent on provided stipulations for Post-Review Discovery Procedure and site avoidance stipulations would be followed.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The installation of PALS or post vanes would temporarily disturb soils on the project site. Best Management Practices (BMP) have been developed to avoid or minimize temporary fine sediment impacts during construction. All ground disturbance would be stabilized, and native seeding and planting would occur post-construction.

BDA implementation would not exceed 0.25 cubic yards of fill. No fill would be removed or disposed of during installation.

Boulder structures would manipulate less than 2.4 cubic yards for all 3 structures proposed and would directly impact less than 1,000 square feet of the streambed. No fill or rock material would be removed from the floodplain or disposed of during installation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed or special-status plant species are known to exist on the site. Areas that are disturbed would be revegetated with native plant species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status or ESA-listed wildlife species or habitat would be negatively impacted by the installation of the proposed structures. Wildlife may be temporarily disturbed and displaced 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 project is covered under the Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) Biological Opinion (BiOp) under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Listed fish species include Snake River Basin steelhead and their designated critical habitat. The project plans were reviewed by BPA engineering technical services and a series of conservation measures in accordance with the HIP consultation would be implemented to ensure that the project would benefit ESA-listed fish species.

Project work would occur in low to no flow conditions along the creek bed; therefore, no impact to non-ESA-listed fish species or to the waterbody would occur. In the long term, this project was designed to increase fish habitat complexity.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no designated wetlands located in the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground-disturbing activities are not likely to intersect with groundwater and would have no impact on aquifers. Construction BMPs would be implemented to prevent contamination of groundwater from equipment leaks or spills.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is located on Washington state lands. No changes to land use would occur.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor changes to visual quality. The new structures would be visually consistent with naturally occurring beaver dams, adjacent vegetation, and topography. Structures would not be located in a visually sensitive area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in emissions and dust from vehicles accessing the site during construction and staging activities.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in ambient noise during staging and construction activities. Any noise emitted from these activities 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: The proposed activities are not considered hazardous nor would result in any health risks to the public. Helicopter use in the project area would temporarily increase safety risk; however, helicopter landing zones and routes would be clearly marked to avoid unauthorized personnel entering those areas. All areas will be closed off to public access to avoid potential risk to 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: The proposed project would be implemented with permission and support of the landowner on public land owned by WDFW.

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

Signed:

Catherine Clark
Environmental Protection Specialist