

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Southern Territories Habitat Enhancement Monitoring, Vegetation Management, and Maintenance

**Project No.:** 1997-056-00

**Project Manager:** Jesse Wilson, EWL-4

**Location:** Klickitat 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) proposes to fund the Yakama Nation to conduct steelhead spawning surveys, passive integrated transponder (PIT) tagging, data collection, and water quality monitoring, and to maintain upland and riparian plantings in the Klickitat River Basin.

## ***Steelhead Pedestrian Surveys***

Regular pedestrian surveys would be conducted in late January through early May and would cover Rock Creek and its tributaries, Walaluks Creek, and Luna Gulch in the known geographic range for steelhead.

Individual redds, live fish, and carcasses would be observed and recorded. Steelhead and coho carcasses would be collected in the fall months to obtain age information. Carcasses would be examined for sex determination, egg/milt retention, and presence of tags or marks. Scale samples would be taken from carcasses.

## ***Water Quality Monitoring***

Water temperature would be monitored seasonally at approximately 10 sites throughout the Klickitat River subbasin using thermographs. Basic water quality parameter measurements (pH, conductivity, dissolved oxygen, turbidity) would be recorded during each measurement. Stream flows would be monitored continuously at approximately 10 sites throughout the Klickitat River subbasin using gages that continuously collect stage height and temperature. Monitoring sites would be accessed on foot.

## ***Planting and Vegetation Management***

Nursery stock for riparian plantings would continue to be maintained by the Yakama Nation to support ongoing plant management efforts at previously installed habitat enhancement project sites. Vegetation maintenance activities would include planting, watering, and control of invasive, non-native vegetation by mowing and mechanical removal methods. Herbicide applications, if needed, would be done by a licensed applicator using an herbicide approved for use in riparian areas.

### ***Klickitat Field Office Nursery***

Yakama Nation would continue operating a small nursery at the Klickitat Field Office. Plants would be grown in containers housed in above ground wooden frames. There would be a total of five rectangular wooden frames measuring approximately 30 ft by 4 ft each. The total footprint of the nursery is approximately 50 ft by 36 ft. Pathways between wooden frames would have maintained weed barriers and bark mulch to discourage invasive plant establishment and growth. The nursery would be watered three to four times a week via an automatic overhead sprinkler system. Each year 1,500 to 2,000 plants would be grown: a mix of pine, rose, spirea, dogwood, oaks, willow, snowberry, and Oregon grape. Planting stock would be obtained from taking cuttings from local stock and purchasing bareroot stock from Washington based nurseries. Planting medium would be obtained from a local supplier who makes specialized potting blends. In a typical year, staff would stock the nursery in spring, monitor plants throughout the summer, and then outplant in the fall.

These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System. These actions also support Bonneville's commitments to the Yakama Nation under the 2020 Columbia River Fish Accord Extension agreement, while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System 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  
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:** Southern Territories Habitat Enhancement Monitoring, Vegetation Management, and Maintenance

## **Project Site Description**

Proposed activities would occur on reservation and private lands within the Yakima River Basin. The project sites would occur on existing restoration sites located within Klickitat County. Project area vegetation would include hillsides forested with conifers and forested riparian zones with targeted non-native plant species locations proposed for removal. Vegetation management sites are approximately 30 miles north of Klickitat, WA. Monitoring sites are approximately 15 miles east of Goldendale, WA.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no heavy equipment operations (e.g., bulldozers, excavators) proposed, so there would be no major soil or ground disturbance with potential to affect cultural resources. All project sites and actions were the subject of cultural resource surveys and consultation with Washington SHPO and relevant tribes at the time of the original restoration implementation from which these subsequent vegetation management actions arise. All actions were determined to have “no potential to cause effect” or “no historic properties affected.”

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Vegetation management would consist of mechanical (mowing, hand pulling, and weed eating) and chemical weed treatment. Minor temporary ground disturbances would occur as part of the vegetation maintenance but would have only a minor impact on the geology and soils. Vegetation maintenance would be intended to improve habitat conditions.

Pedestrian surveys and water quality monitoring would have no ground disturbance associated with it. Monitoring sites would be accessed by foot but would not impact the geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Federal or state special-status plant species known to exist in the project areas. Minor and temporary vegetation disturbances associated with weed treatment and planting activities, or site access would have short term effects on vegetation. Vegetation

maintenance would be intended to have long term beneficial effects by removing invasive species and enhancing native species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project impacts to ESA-listed species would be covered under the Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) Biological Opinion (BiOp). Listed species present in the project areas include Gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) and Yellow Billed Cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*). State special-status wildlife species or their habitats known to occur in the project area would have minimal impact due to temporary human presence and increase in ambient noise during project activities. Non-listed wildlife present during the proposed activities may be temporarily disturbed by human presence and increase in ambient noise. Any impacts would be short term and temporary. Improved habitat conditions would be the long term result of vegetation management activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project impacts to ESA-listed species would be covered under the HIP BiOp. Listed fish species present in the project areas include Middle Columbia River steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and their essential habitat. A series of conservation measures would be implemented to ensure that the project would benefit ESA-listed fish species. Other fish species, including non-ESA-listed sensitive species and their habitat would have minimal impact as proposed activities would follow all best management practices for vegetation management and survey activities.

#### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not change the hydrology within the project area, and any activities within or near wetlands would be limited to methods with little to no ground disturbance. No fill, excavation, or destruction of wetlands would occur. Effects on wetlands would be temporary and limited to plantings and the removal of undesirable vegetation to improve conditions for native wetland species. Improved habitat conditions would result in long term positive impacts for local wetlands.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or use of groundwater are proposed. Herbicide impacts to groundwater and aquifers would be minimized by application according to manufacturer's label and would be limited. The proposed actions would have no long term impact to groundwater.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The underlying land use would not change and no impact to specially-designed areas would occur as a result of this project.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would have little to no effect on visual quality and the project would be returning the area to a more natural vegetative condition.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minor, temporary effects to the air quality of the environment from dust and exhaust due to vehicle use for site access and vegetation management actions. Normal conditions would return upon project completion.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would result in a 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: The proposed work may present a small human health and safety risk associated with working around waterbodies but is not expected to create a hazard to the general public. There would be no soil contamination or hazardous conditions. All personnel would use best management practices to protect workers' health and 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: Yakama Nation would work with landowners for all work on private property.

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