

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Chahalpam Floodplain Vegetation Management

**Project No.:** 2009-012-00

**Project Manager:** Eric Andersen, EWL - 4

**Location:** Marion County, OR

**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 Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde to implement terrestrial vegetation management activities on eight acres of riparian area adjacent to Chahalpam Pond to increase the native plant cover. The Chahalpam Pond has been monitored for Oregon chub by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife since 1995 and is identified in the Recovery Plan for Oregon Chub (Gray Slough).

Proposed actions include removing invasive species by mechanical and chemical methods targeting Himalayan blackberry, yellow flag iris, ludwigia, and reed canary grass. Specifically, invasive vegetation would be removed by mechanical methods utilizing a rubber tracked skid steer with mulching head and/or flail mower and motorized hand tools including chain saws, weed whips, and brush cutters. In-water invasive species such as ludwigia, yellow flag iris, and reed canary grass would be removed by hand-pulling and weed whips. Chemical applications would be applied to invasive vegetation after mechanical applications. Chemicals would be applied using backpack sprayers for spot treatments.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills commitments under the 2008 National Marine Fisheries Service Willamette River Biological Opinion, 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.

/s/ Shawn Skinner

Shawn Skinner

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

September 7, 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:** Chahalpam Floodplain Vegetation Management

## **Project Site Description**

The project is located on Chahalpam, a 462-acre conservation parcel located near Stayton, OR along the North Santiam River. The property contains portions of floodplain forests along both banks of the river and the property encompasses more than a mile of river frontage. The project site consists of 10 acres; eight acres of riparian area that surround the 2-acre Chahalpam Pond. The Chahalpam Pond is an historical off-channel habitat that is significant for Oregon chub and other native aquatic species. Only a small area remains wetted throughout the year and dry river bed exists on the inlet. It is estimated that the pond inlet connects with the river at less than a 2-year flood interval.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA made a determination of no adverse effect to historic properties on August 2, 2021 (OR 2020 102). BPA consulted with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz. Concurrence was received from the Oregon SHPO (September 1, 2021). BPA did not receive concurrence from any other consulting parties within 30 days.

Notes:

- In the event any archaeological material is encountered during project activities, work would be stopped immediately and a BPA Archaeologist and Historian would be notified, as well as consulting parties.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions would have limited effect on soil and geologic values. Track and tire disturbance would occur throughout the project area; but generally only a few inches in depth. The minor disturbance would be balanced through the proposed action goal of a restored floodplain forest.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no known Federal/state special-status plant species in the project area. Disturbance of plants in the project area would largely occur to non-native plants. There

would be a long-term benefit by restoring the project area to a more natural condition through the treatment of invasive plants and replanting with native plants.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, short-term disturbance would occur to wildlife species in the area from noise associated with mechanical weed treatment; including western pond turtles (Oregon-listed Sensitive species). The goal of the work is to improve riparian and floodplain habitat for the benefit of terrestrial and aquatic species. There are no other known Federal/state special-status wildlife species in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not involve any in-water work or impact to water bodies or fish. The restoration activities do take place in the floodway, but any temporary impacts would be minimized by the restoration of the floodplain forest. The goal of the work is to improve riparian and floodplain habitat for the benefit of terrestrial and aquatic species, including Upper Willamette River Chinook Salmon and Steelhead. Impacts to ESA-listed species (Upper Willamette River Chinook Salmon and Steelhead) would be covered under BPA's programmatic Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) biological opinion with the USFWS and NMFS. A project notification form (2022001) was submitted on June 11, 2021.

#### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not be changing the hydrology within the project area, only removing non-native vegetation. The wetlands in the project area would be enhanced and restored by this project. Disturbance of the wetlands is for the purpose of removal of invasive plant species. Any potential wetland impacts would be limited and temporary. There would be a long-term benefit by restoring the project area to a more natural condition.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Herbicide impacts to groundwater and aquifers would be minimized by application according to manufacturer's label, and would be limited (spot treatments). The proposed actions would have no long-term impact to groundwater or aquifers.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions would not impact or change land use.

#### **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some changes in vegetation and the associated visual quality would occur in the immediate project area, but the changes would be returning the area to a more natural

state and would be consistent with the visual quality of the surrounding area and/or native plant habitat. There would be a long-term improvement in the visual quality of the area due to the restoration of a more native plant and animal habitat condition.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, short-term impact to air quality from vehicle emissions and dust generated by equipment use (mowing lawns, weed eating). Herbicides would be applied as spot treatments by hand-held backpack sprayers with limited or no impact to air quality.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, short-term increase in ambient noise during use of vehicles and equipment.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All applicable safety regulations would be followed during work activities.

### **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 entire project area is owned and managed by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. The project would not occur on any land owned by additional landowners. Adjacent land upstream and downstream of the project site is owned by the Tribe.

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

Signed: /s/ Shawn Skinner September 7, 2021  
Shawn Skinner, ECF-4 Date  
Environmental Protection Specialist