

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Chahalpam Floodplain Restoration Phase 2

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

**Project Manager:** Allan Whiting, EWL - 4

**Location:** Marion County, OR

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 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 (CTGR) to implement a channel restoration project along the North Santiam River in Marion County, OR. The project would continue floodplain restoration at Chahalpam property by removing three fish passage barriers and reconnecting side channels to the mainstem North Santiam River.

At Site 1, CTGR would remove the existing road culvert and replace it with a pre-cast concrete box culvert placed on concrete strip footings. This would improve fish passage upstream in the Dieckman Creek Tributary by 0.4 miles. The box culvert would have a 15-foot span, 8-foot rise and would be 30 feet in length. The upstream and downstream channel would be graded to blend into the streambed. The road embankment would be reconstructed, and the road surface would be regraded to existing conditions. The road slope would be armored with riprap at the culvert inlet and outlet. Estimated removal quantities are 370 cubic yards; estimated fill quantities are 275 cubic yards.

At Site 2, CTGR would remove an abandoned crossing with a non-functioning culvert from Dieckman Creek Tributary and dispose of the materials on site. This would improve fish passage upstream in the Dieckman Creek Tributary by 0.4 miles. Crossing materials would be excavated to the historic channel grade and excess fill would be disposed of onsite at the designated area. The minor channel re-shaping grading would not extend beyond the current footprint of the current fill area. Estimated removal quantities are 100 cubic yards.

At Site 3, CTGR would remove a culvert from Dieckman Creek Tributary. This would improve fish passage upstream in the Dieckman Creek Tributary by 0.2 miles. Crossing materials would be excavated to the historic channel grade within the current footprint with excess fill to be disposed of onsite at the designated area. Estimated removal quantities are 80 cubic yards.

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 1021.102 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; 89 FR 34074, April 30, 2024; 90 FR 29676, July 3, 2025 [Interim Final Rule]) and *DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Implementing Procedures* (dated June 30, 2025), BPA has determined the following:

- 1) The proposed action fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021;
- 2) The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion; and
- 3) There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal (see attached Environmental Evaluation).

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review. <sup>1</sup>

Nicholas Johnson  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

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<sup>1</sup> BPA is aware that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), on February 25, 2025, issued an interim final rule to remove its NEPA implementing regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500–1508. Based on CEQ guidance, and to promote completion of its NEPA review in a timely manner and without delay, in this CX BPA is voluntarily relying on the CEQ regulations, in addition to the interim final rule to revise DOE NEPA regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021 and NEPA Implementing Procedures (dated June 30, 2025), to meet its obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.

# Categorical Exclusion Environmental Evaluation

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 Restoration Phase 2

## **Project Site Description**

The project is located on the Chahalpam property, 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. These fish passage barriers are located near where Dieckman Tributary merges with Dieckman Creek approximately 1,100 feet from its confluence of the North Santiam River (river mile 9).

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA made a determination of no historic properties effected on June 13, 2025 (OR 2023 092). BPA consulted with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, 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 Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde (June 12, 2025) and Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (July 13, 2025). BPA did not receive a response 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: Temporary, minor impacts to soil from increased erosion potential during construction and grading activities. Sediment control best management practices (BMPs) would be installed prior to project implementation to minimize potential for in-stream turbidity or excessive runoff during construction. Excavated sediments would be loaded into a truck and hauled out to an upland spoil area.

### **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. Temporary impacts to existing vegetation during grading activities. 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: Minor, short-term disturbance would occur to wildlife species in the area from noise associated with construction; including western pond turtles (Oregon-listed Sensitive species). Western pond turtles have been reported nearby, but are not known to occupy areas within the proposed project site. The goal of the work is to improve riparian, floodplain and adjacent upland 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: No known state-listed special-status species present. 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. The project area would be isolated and a stream bypass would be placed in the primary side channel that would have flow in the channel during construction. The project would result in long-term net benefits to fish species within the project reach from increased fish access to spawning and rearing habitat.

## **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Most of the proposed work would take place within waters and wetlands, with the exception of staging and fill placement, but these areas would be restored following construction. Wetland quality would improve due to the restoration of natural flow patterns.

Notes:

- The project sponsor shall be responsible for acquiring all applicable Clean Water Act permitting from USACE and coordinate with Oregon DSL including all compensatory mitigation requirements.
- Project Sponsor shall be responsible for developing and implementing Best Management Practices on-site to address erosion and water quality measures during construction
- The notice to proceed with construction would be predicated on the successful permitting approvals from USACE and Oregon DSL.

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions would have no long-term impact to groundwater or aquifers. If excavation intercepts groundwater, a straw bale filter dam would be placed at the downstream end of the side channel grading area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The access route and crossings were previously abandoned with the change of ownership of the private parcel owned by CTGR. The land use of this parcel was previously converted from farming to conservation and the historic road routes were previously converted to a natural state with floodplain restoration efforts for the property. The proposed actions would not impact or change current 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. 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 during construction activities. No other impact to air quality would occur as a result of this project.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, short-term increase in ambient noise during use of vehicles and equipment. Noise levels would not change after construction or as a result of this project.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All applicable safety regulations would be followed during work activities. Local access by CTGR to the site would be restricted during the construction period and would return to normal conditions post project completion.

### 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:

Nicholas Johnson  
Environmental Protection Specialist