

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Steigerwald Uplands Land Acquisition Funding

**Project No.:** 00341036

**Project Manager:** Emmanuel Jaramillo, TEP-TPP-1

**Location:** Clark County, Washington; Township 1 North, Range 4 East, Section 15, Willamette Meridian; Tax lots 134378000 and 134389000

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B1.25 Real property transfers for cultural resources protection, habitat preservation, and wildlife management

**Description of the Proposed Action:** BPA is proposing to fund the acquisition of two contiguous parcels consisting of a total of 51.88 acres in Clark County, Washington. The funding would be provided to the Friends of the Columbia Gorge Land Trust (Gorge Land Trust) to acquire these parcels, which are known as the Steigerwald Uplands, for inclusion into an adjacent wildlife refuge. The parcels are located about two miles east of the city of Washougal within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (National Scenic Area) which was established in 1986 by the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act (16 U.S.C. 544-544p).

The Steigerwald Uplands are currently privately-owned, undeveloped pasture with wooded areas, located just north of the main unit of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge. The Steigerwald Uplands are within an approved USFWS refuge boundary of the Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge.

The land acquisition would protect the scenic and natural landscape from potential residential development, mining, or timber harvest, as well as preserve the habitat for wildlife and native plant communities. The parcels include two Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Priority Habitats—Oregon white oak savannah and white oak/conifer/deciduous woodland—and are visible from six key viewing areas in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, including Oregon's Interstate 84, the Historic Columbia River Highway, Crown Point, Larch Mountain, and the Columbia River. The Gorge Land Trust intends to donate the property to the USFWS for inclusion into the Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge in order to provide permanent protection of the habitat.

**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, July 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/ Kimberly R. St.Hilaire

Kimberly R. St.Hilaire  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason

Stacy L. Mason  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: April 10, 2018

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:** Steigerwald Uplands Land Acquisition Funding

### Project Site Description

The parcels are mostly undeveloped pasture land that is fairly level and includes scattered Oregon white oak. Along the southern boundary of the parcel, the land is vegetated with mixed coniferous/deciduous woodland which includes some white oak. Both of these plant communities are Washington Department of Wildlife Priority Habitats that function as plant and wildlife habitat. The understory is vegetated with a mixture of native and non-native shrubs, herbs, and grasses. There are no buildings or machinery present on the property. An unpaved driveway crosses a portion of the property, leading to a 5-acre inholding with a residence. The terrain is fairly level except along the southern property boundary, where the land slopes to the south. There are no water features on the property except for some areas with seasonal ponding that may meet wetland criteria.

### Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. <b>Historic and Cultural Resources</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There would be no effect to historic and cultural resources from the land acquisition because it only includes funding for the transfer of title and there will be no ground disturbance, no change of use, and there are no existing structures on the property. To the extent that subsequent stewardship activities could have an effect, it is expected that the Friends of the Gorge Land Trust would comply with all applicable laws and regulations.		
2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> See explanation for #1 above.		
3. <b>Plants</b> (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> See explanation for #1 above.		
4. <b>Wildlife</b> (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> See explanation for #1 above.		
5. <b>Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish</b> (including federal/state special-status species and ESUs)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> See explanation for #1 above.		

6. <b>Wetlands</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> See explanation for #1 above.		
7. <b>Groundwater and Aquifers</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> See explanation for #1 above.		
8. <b>Land Use and Specially Designated Areas</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> The U.S. Forest Service does not require consistency review with the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Management Plan where the proposal only involves acquisition of land with no development proposal (pers. Comm., Miki Fujikawa, Lands Staff Officer, US Forest Service, November 14, 2016).		
9. <b>Visual Quality</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> See explanation for #1 above.		
10. <b>Air Quality</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> See explanation for #1 above.		
11. <b>Noise</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> See explanation for #1 above.		
12. <b>Human Health and Safety</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment was conducted for the Steigerwald Uplands parcels that would be acquired and the Environmental Assessment reviewed by BPA staff; it did not reveal evidence of Recognized Environmental Conditions in connection with the property ( <i>A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment</i> , December 5, 2016, prepared by Hahn and Associates, Inc.)		

### 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, if necessary:

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

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**Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Description: Friends of the Gorge engaged in coordination and negotiations with the willing seller of the parcels. In addition, BPA met with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff several times to verify that the property is within the Oaks Unit Addition and to verify USFWS plans to accept the land donation and inclusion into the Steigerwald National Wildlife Refuge. Landowners within ¼ mile of the parcels are being notified of the land acquisition, as are Clark County Commissioners, the Columbia River Gorge Commission, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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

Signed: /s/ Kimberly R. St.Hilaire  
Kimberly R. St.Hilaire, ECT  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: April 10, 2018