

United States Government

Department of Energy
Bonneville Power Administration

memorandum

DATE: August 17, 2010

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: KEC-4

SUBJECT: Environmental Clearance Memorandum

TO: Dorie Welch
Project Manager – KEWM-4

Proposed Action: Provision of funds to The Nature Conservancy (Conservancy) for purchase of Wildish Property

Fish and Wildlife Project No.: 2009-017-00, Contract # BPA-004959

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):

B1.25 Transfer, lease, disposition or acquisition of interests in uncontaminated land for habitat preservation or wildlife management, and only associated buildings that support these purposes. Uncontaminated means that there would be no potential for release of substances at a level, or in a form, that would pose a threat to public health or the environment.

Location: Township 18 South, Range 2 and 3 West of the Springfield Quad, in Lane County, Oregon (Near Springfield, Oregon)

Proposed by: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and the Conservancy

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to fund the acquisition of the 1270-acre Wildish property by the Conservancy. BPA will be granted a perpetual conservation easement over the entire property as a condition of funding the acquisition. The Wildish tract includes the confluence and lower reaches of the Coast and Middle Fork Willamette rivers and the surrounding floodplain habitat and upland oak woodlands, prairie and conifer forest habitats. By securing control to restore lowland riparian and upland habitats on the property the acquisition will benefit fish as well as valley and foothills wildlife. The property is located in an area identified as a priority area for fish and wildlife and, in combination with over 3000 acres of adjacent public land, acquisition of the Wildish tract will increase options for restoration of streamside gravels, alcoves and islands, and for changing flow regimes on the lower 6 miles of the Middle Fork of the Willamette. The property proposed for acquisition contains habitat that will provide BPA with credits for partial mitigation of wildlife habitat losses due to the construction and operation of the federal hydroelectric facilities on the Willamette River. The acquisition will provide long-lasting benefits as part of a growing network of conservation lands in the Willamette Valley by allowing wildlife access to native upland prairie, oak woodland and Douglas fir habitats.

Numerous wildlife species use this type of habitat, including one listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) – Fender's blue butterfly. The native upland prairie habitat includes Kincaid's lupine, a species listed as threatened under ESA. The Conservancy's

acquisition and BPA's conservation easement will prevent habitat conversion and secure rights to restore and maintain habitat that benefits 26 focal species. In addition to the Fender's blue butterfly, species likely to use this property include: sharptail snake, southern alligator lizard, acorn woodpecker, American kestrel, chipping sparrow, common yellowthroat, horned lark, northern red legged frog, olive-sided flycatcher, pileated woodpecker, purple martin, Vaux's swift, vesper sparrow, western wood-pewee, western meadowlark, white-breasted nuthatch, wood duck, yellow warbler, red tree vole, Townsend's big-eared bat, and Western gray squirrel.

Once the property has been acquired, the Conservancy will perform restoration and wildlife enhancements and provide long-term stewardship of the land to benefit the Willamette Subbasin Plan's terrestrial and aquatic focal species and to meet the plan's habitat objectives using ecosystem and adaptive management principals. The Willamette Subbasin Plan was developed by the Northwest Power and Conservation Council (NPCC) as a subbasin-level recovery framework to help protect, provide mitigation for and enhance fish and wildlife populations adversely affected by the development and operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System. The completed plan was adopted as part of NPCC's Columbia River Basin Fish and Wildlife Program, helps direct BPA funding of watershed-related projects, and serves to guide a wide range of conservation organizations.

The Conservancy agrees that this acquisition and the permanent protection of the property that will result are ultimately being undertaken for the benefit of the public. Ownership by the Conservancy and the perpetual conservation easement to be held by BPA will ensure that the critical wildlife habitat values present on the property will be protected forever.

BPA is funding the Conservancy's acquisition of the property and receiving a conservation easement. Prior to any management activities, BPA will conduct further environmental review.

Findings: BPA has determined that the proposed action complies with Section 1021.410 and Appendix B of Subpart D 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). The proposed action does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal. The proposal is not connected [40 C.F.R. 1508.25(a)(1)] to other actions with potentially significant impacts, is not related to other proposed actions with cumulatively significant impacts [40 C.F.R. 1508.25(a)(2)], and is not precluded by 40 C.F.R. 1506.1 or 10 C.F.R. 1021.211. Moreover, the proposed action would not (i) threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, (ii) require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities, (iii) disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act-excluded petroleum and natural gas products that pre-exist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases, or (iv) adversely affect environmentally sensitive resources. Based on the provision that a cultural resource survey will be conducted prior to any ground disturbing activities, this proposed action meets the requirements for the Categorical Exclusion referenced above.

We therefore determine that the proposed action may be categorically excluded from further NEPA review and documentation.

/s/ Israel Duran

Israel Duran

Environmental Protection Specialist – KEC-4

Concur:

/s/ Katherine S. Pierce

Katherine S. Pierce

NEPA Compliance Officer – KEC-4

DATE: August 17, 2010

Attachment:

Environmental Checklist for Categorical Exclusions

Environmental Checklist for Categorical Exclusions

Name of Proposed Project: TNC Willamette Wildlife Acquisitions

Project #: 2009-017-00 Cont# BPA-004959

This project has been found to not adversely affect the following environmentally sensitive resources, laws, and regulations:

Environmental Resources	No Adverse Effect	No Adverse Effect With Conditions
1. Cultural Resources Funding land acquisition only.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. T & E Species, or their habitat(s) Funding land acquisition only.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Floodplains or wetlands Funding land acquisition only.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Areas of special designation Funding land acquisition only.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Health & safety Funding land acquisition only.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Prime agricultural lands Funding land acquisition only.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Special sources of water Funding land acquisition only.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Consistency with state and local laws and regulations Funding land acquisition only.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Pollution control at Federal facilities Funding land acquisition only.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Other Funding land acquisition only.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signed: /s/ Israel Duran

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