

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) Wetland Enhancement at Coyote Creek South

Project No.: 2011-004-00

Project Manager: Hannah Dondy-Kaplan, EWM-4

Location: Lane 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 contribute funding towards ODFW staff time to assist with a wetland enhancement project implemented by Ducks Unlimited. The project would involve replacement of water control structures to restore natural wetland function at ODFW's Coyote Creek South (CCS) property in western central Oregon. BPA funds would contribute towards construction oversight and project monitoring, and are provided under the Willamette Wildlife Mitigation Program (WWMP) as settlement for the construction of dams in the Willamette Valley. Implementation funding would be provided through a separate North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grant. Ducks Unlimited engineering staff would be onsite to assist with contractor oversight and final inspection.

Ducks Unlimited, on behalf of ODFW, would install seven water control structures and culverts between eight man-made ephemeral ponds on-site. The ponds were created for seasonal waterfowl hunting, holding water through a series of dikes, and a central ditch system. Seasonal dams within the ditch system control water levels to achieve winter habitat and desired vegetation conditions. Currently, no permanent water control structures exist. The new structures would enable ODFW to control water elevations to support wintering waterfowl and native emergent vegetation, benefitting 34 acres of wetland. Each new structure would consist of a prefabricated flashboard riser, an aggregate base, and culverts 12 to 24 inches in diameter. A small rubber tired or tracked excavator and a dump truck would be utilized during project implementation. Excavation depths to install the new structures would be between four and six feet and would generally be confined to the existing footprint of the berms. No more than 50 cubic yards of wetland fill would be displaced. Material that was not compacted and used as fill for the structures would be spread in a layer no more than six inches thick in locations specified by the project engineer. The project would be implemented in September when the site is completely dry, and would take approximately two to three weeks to complete. The site would be accessed via existing roads/trails as far as possible, after which equipment would be driven over the grass field surrounding the project area. Access routes within the field would be mowed prior to driving equipment. All fueling, maintenance, and staging of equipment would be carried out on level ground at least 500 feet from water. All areas of disturbance would be seeded with a native grass mix.

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/ Mandy Hope

Mandy Hope
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
ACS Professional Staffing

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

August 24, 2020

Date

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: ODFW Wetland Enhancement at Coyote Creek South

Project Site Description

The CCS project area is located approximately seven miles west of Eugene in Section 2, T18S, R5W, at an elevation of about 385 feet. The area is within the Willamette Valley, and consists of agricultural fields that were historically wet prairie. The surrounding areas are comprised of rural residential, farmland, and lands in conservation. The project is located within the South Coyote Unit of Fern Ridge Wildlife Area on lands owned by ODFW. Coyote Creek is a perennial stream adjacent to the project area to the north-northeast which is classified as a non-anadromous fish-bearing stream.

A series of eight ephemeral ponds were created between 1936 and 1952 for seasonal waterfowl hunting. Water enters the ponds via upslope runoff, groundwater recharge, and rain water events. Water flows through the site via a ditch running from southeast to northwest and drains into Coyote Creek. Coyote Creek flows into Fern Ridge Reservoir. Fern Ridge Dam outflows into the Long Tom River. Present vegetation within the wetland cells is dominated by non-native reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*).

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Consultation for replacement of water control structures within existing wetland cell units at CCS was completed under BPA Project Numbers OR 2018 109 (SHPO Case No 19-0166); OR 2017 082 (SHPO Case No 18-0726 and 16-1617); and OR 2015 050 (SHPO Case No 15-0885).

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary soil disturbance during project implementation. Sediment barriers (silt fencing) would be installed at the toe of the compacted fill on the outlet side of the water control structures to control erosion. All work would be conducted in accordance with the terms and conditions of Regional General Permit 6 (RGP-6) for BPA-Funded Habitat Improvement Projects within the Columbia River Basin.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: Short-term impact to plants removed or trampled during excavation. The project site would be planted with a native grass mix of tufted hair grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*),

American slough sedge (*Carex obnupta*), and spike bent grass (*Agrostis exarata*) following excavation. Long-term benefits to plants expected.

ESA-listed Bradshaw's desert-parsley (*Lomatium bradshawii*), Kincaid's lupine (*Lupinus sulphureus* ssp. *Kincaidii*), Nelson's checker-mallow (*Sidalcea nelsoniana*), water howellia (*Howellia aquatilis*), and Willamette daisy (*Erigeron decumbens*) (critical habitat) have the potential to occur in the CCS project area (USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) Consultation Code 01EOFW00-2020-SLI-0459). Three populations of Bradshaw's desert-parsley have been documented within the CCS property. No other known occurrences of listed species have been documented in the project area.

Notes:

- ODFW staff would flag zones where Bradshaw's desert-parsley are present prior to project implementation and restrict all equipment from the zones. ODFW staff would be on-site during construction to ensure zones are not impacted. For these reasons, there would be no effect to Bradshaw's desert-parsley as a result of this project (No Effect (NE) memo prepared 6/11/2020).

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: ESA-listed fisher (*Pekania pennanti*), marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*), northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*), streaked horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris strigata*), and Fender's blue butterfly (*Icaricia icarioides fenderi*) have the potential to occur in the CCS project area (USFWS IPaC Consultation Code 01EOFW00-2020-SLI-0459). The only documented occurrence of listed species in the project area is streaked horned lark, which are seasonally present at the CCS wetland enhancement project site as the result of habitat restoration actions on the property. ODFW monitors streaked horned lark presence, nest locations, and fledglings throughout the year. Active nest locations are flagged.

No other known occurrences of listed species have been recorded at the CCS project site. Prior to ground-disturbing activities, an ODFW project biologist would inspect the site to ensure no wildlife are within impact zones.

Notes:

- Access to the project would be delineated via staking to ensure that all project-related traffic remained outside of lark nesting activity. ODFW staff would monitor lark activity throughout the project duration to ensure that construction access to the project is outside of lark activity. For these reasons, there would be no effect to streaked horned lark (NE memo prepared 6/11/2020).

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no federally listed aquatic species in the CCS wetland enhancement project area. The site is adjacent to Coyote Creek, which drains north into Fern Ridge Reservoir. The Fern Ridge Dam is a barrier to anadromous fish species. The project site would be completely dry during implementation. There would be no in-water work or discharge of water. For these reasons, there would be no effect to aquatic species or water bodies (NE memo prepared 6/11/2020).

Notes:

- All fueling, maintenance, and staging of equipment would be carried out on level ground at least 500 feet from water in locations determined by the project engineer. All equipment would be supplied with a fire extinguisher and spill containment kit.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In accordance with the terms and conditions of the RGP-6, ODFW obtained Nationwide Permit (NWP) NWP-2020-273 (valid until 7/31/2023) from the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for discharges associated with wetland enhancement activities. ODFW would discharge up to 50 cubic yards of rock and soil below the ordinary high water mark of Coyote Creek and abutting wetlands to remove and install the new equipment. The project would have long-term positive impacts to wetlands by allowing the project site to become inundated and restore natural wetland function.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not affect groundwater or the water table. Excavation depths are expected to be between 4 to 6 feet.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Existing land use would not change as a result of the project.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Long-term positive impacts to visual quality as a result of increased habitat complexity.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary generation of emissions associated with increased vehicular traffic would occur during project activities. A water truck would be brought on site for dust control if necessary.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Short-term noise generated during project implementation would not substantially impact the surrounding environment.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All personnel would use best management practices to protect worker 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: The project site is owned and managed by ODFW. No external coordination is needed to implement project work at this site.

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

Signed: /s/ Mandy Hope

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Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
ACS Professional Staffing

August 24, 2020

Date