

United States Government

Department of Energy
Bonneville Power Administration

memorandum

DATE: July 28, 2006

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: KEC-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Watershed Management Program EIS (DOE/EIS-0265/SA-271)

TO: David Kaplow - KEWU-4
Fish and Wildlife Project Manager

Proposed Action: Big Canyon Creek Watershed Restoration

Project No: 1999-015-00

Watershed Management Techniques or Actions Addressed Under This Supplement Analysis

(See App. A of the Watershed Management Program EIS): 1.4 Pre-implementation evaluation of proposed enhancements; 1.8 Bank protection through vegetation management; 2.1 Maintain healthy riparian communities; 2.2 Plant/protect conifers in riparian areas for thermal cover; 2.4 Provide filter strips to catch sediment and other pollutants; 2.6 Native seed inventories; 2.7 Avoid Exotic Species; 2.9 Mechanical Vegetation Removal; 2.10 Biological Removal of Vegetation; 2.11 Hand Pulling; 3.1 Plant/protect vegetation/conservation cover; 3.2 Conservation cropping sequence; 3.3 Conservation tillage; 3.4 Contour farming; 3.7 Critical area planting; 3.9 Grasses and legumes in rotation; 3.14 Field border; 3.15 Filter strip; 3.16 Grassed waterways; 3.17 Sediment basins; 3.18 Sediment and water control basins; 3.26 Evaluate field limitations; 3.27 Equipment calibration and use; 3.28 Alternative pest management strategies; 3.29 Herbicide/pesticide application; 3.30 Apply herbicide/pesticide selectively; 3.34 Aerial spray applications: buffer zones; 3.37 Spill contingency; 4.5 Drip or trickle irrigation; 4.24 Protect springs; 5.13 Alternative water sources; 6.5 Water supply: pipeline; 6.7 Water supply: trough; 6.9 Water supply: spring development; 6.10 Access: Fencing; 6.14 Vegetation stabilization: critical area planting; 7.7 Reduce risk of road-related surface erosion; 7.8 Drainage control to minimize erosion and sedimentation; 7.13 Grade road

Location: Big Canyon Creek Watershed, Nez Perce County and Lewis County, Idaho, in the Clearwater Subbasin of the Mountain Snake Province

Proposed by: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and the Nez Perce Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)

Description of the Proposed Action: The proposed restoration activities within the Big Canyon Creek Watershed will assist in the recovery and restoration of fish and wildlife habitat. Project activities include fence installation, road maintenance, creation of alternative water systems, planting of native species, weed control, and activities on agricultural lands. These activities will improve the quality of riparian areas, including fish habitat, by reducing non-point pollution, removing invasive species, and by creating shade from native plantings, thereby improving water quality.

Project activities to include:

- Installation of erosion control structures including water and sediment control structures, grassed waterways, grade control structures, and biologs with the goal of reducing gully erosion by 80% at each project site

- Completion of approximately 1/2 mile of road improvements to roads used for access to agricultural areas; improvements consist of shaping, adding water drainage features, surfacing, and a low flow stream crossing
- Conversion of 1,500 acres of non-irrigated agricultural lands to direct seeding tillage to reduce sheet and rill erosion
- Installation of 20 acres of upland and riparian plantings including grass seeding and tree planting
- Preparation of wetland sod biologists for planting in 2007
- Weed control on approximately 5 acres to prepare sites for planting
- Installation of 3,000 linear feet of fence to exclude livestock
- Installation of three alternative water systems to exclude livestock from sensitive riparian areas

Analysis: Lynn Rasmussen, Project Manager for the Nez Perce Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), completed the compliance checklist (attached and signed on July 5, 2006). The projects meet the standards and guidelines for the Watershed Management Program Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Record of Decision (ROD).

Federally Listed Endangered and Threatened Species and Critical Habitat: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) office in Idaho was contacted for information on species proposed for listing or listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) that could occur in the project area. A letter from the Idaho Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office (dated June 7, 2006, attached) states that critical habitat for steelhead, a listed threatened species may occur within the project area.

Five listed species under USFWS jurisdiction may occur in the project area: gray wolf (experimental/non-essential population), bald eagle (threatened-wintering area), Canada lynx (threatened), bull trout (threatened), and Spaulding's catchfly (threatened). Four species under the NOAA Fisheries jurisdiction have the potential to occur in the project area: fall-run Chinook salmon (threatened), spring/summer Chinook salmon (threatened), sockeye salmon (endangered), and Snake River Basin steelhead (threatened). No species proposed for listing have the potential to occur in the project area.

Idaho Fish and Game Department staff and the SWCD project manager reviewed the list of species and considered whether these species or their potential habitat could be in the Big Canyon Creek Watershed. Only two listed aquatic species are known to occur in the project area.

The potential effect to each of the species on the USFWS list is discussed below. The only species that could be affected by this project are steelhead and spring/summer Chinook salmon, which is addressed by consultation using the BPA Habitat Improvement Program Biological Opinion (HIP BO) process (HIP BO approval letter attached).

Steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)

Steelheads occur within the Big Canyon Creek Watersheds, and the potential exists to temporarily affect this species through the implementation of watershed rehabilitation activities. The primary effect would be temporarily increased sedimentation levels during project implementation but the overall effect of the project would be to decrease sedimentation and improve other facets of water quality. **The potential to affect steelhead is addressed by consultation using the BPA HIP BO.**

Spring/summer Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*)

Spring Chinook have been found to occasionally venture into the lower reaches of the mainstem tributaries (Clint Chandler, Fisheries Biologist, Nez Perce Tribe). **The potential to affect spring/summer chinook is addressed by consultation using the BPA HIP BO.**

Fall Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*)

Fall chinook salmon are present in the Clearwater River but seldom travel into the tributaries within the project area. The potential exists to temporarily affect this species through the implementation of watershed rehabilitation activities. **The implementation of watershed rehabilitation activities in the Big Canyon Creek Watershed will have no effect on fall Chinook salmon.**

Sockeye salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*)

Sockeye salmon do not occur in the Big Canyon Creek Watershed and thus watershed rehabilitation activities within these watersheds will have no effect on this species.

Bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*)

Bull trout are present in the Clearwater River but seldom travel into the tributaries within the project area. **The implementation of watershed rehabilitation activities in the Big Canyon Creek Watershed will have no effect on bull trout.**

Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*)

The Idaho Fish and Game (Jay Crenshaw, Wildlife Manager, Clearwater Region) was contacted to inquire about any recorded sighting or denning of the Canada lynx in the Big Canyon Creek Watershed. This agency has no knowledge of recorded sightings or denning presently occurring in the watershed.

Furthermore, due to the state of development and current land use in the project area, no potential habitat currently exists for the Canada lynx within the project area. **It is concluded that these actions will have no effect on the Canada lynx since this species is not present in the action area.**

Bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)

Bald eagles do live and winter along the Clearwater River, but they do not winter within the Big Canyon Creek Watershed. They are only occasionally observed passing through these watersheds. **It is concluded that the watershed rehabilitation actions associated with these projects will have no effect on the bald eagle since this species is not present in the project area.**

Spalding's catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*)

The Spalding's catchfly or its habitat has not been observed on any of the project areas by Lynn Rasmussen, SWCD. Due to the state of development, current land use, and soil disturbance in the project areas, no potential habitat (i.e., relatively pristine, north-facing, tall forb community) currently exists for Spalding's catchfly within the area where project activities are proposed. **Due to the lack of potential habitat the watershed rehabilitation actions associated with these projects will have no effect on Spaulding's catchfly.**

Grey Wolf (*Canis lupus*)

The Idaho Fish and Game (Jay Crenshaw, Wildlife Manager, Clearwater Region) was contacted to inquire about any recorded sighting or denning of the Grey Wolf in the Big Canyon Creek Watershed. This agency has no knowledge of recorded sightings or denning presently occurring in the watershed. Furthermore, due to the state of development and current land use in the project area, no potential habitat currently exists for the gray wolf within the project area. **It is concluded that these actions will have no effect on the grey wolf since this species is not present in the action area.**

Yellow billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*)

The yellow-billed cuckoo needs large old growth black cottonwood stands for survival. **It is concluded that the actions will have no effect on the yellow-billed cuckoo since this species is not present in the action area.**

Cultural Resources: A cultural resources review of the proposed project sites has been completed by the NRCS. This review included a literature search and a field survey by a qualified cultural resource specialist. No cultural resources were identified within project areas during the review of this project. The cultural resources report will be submitted to the SHPO and the Nez Perce Tribe for concurrence. If any cultural or historic resources are identified in the project during implementation, they will be avoided or appropriate mitigation will be done, in conjunction with the SHPO and the Nez Perce Tribe. If cultural deposits are found during the phase of the proposed project, or the nature of the undertaking changes, a cultural resource specialist will be contacted immediately.

Public involvement: Contact with the public has taken place as part of the planning process for the proposed project. SWCD newsletters are distributed on a quarterly basis. A public survey was sent out to watershed residents in January 2006. During the public meetings, proposed activities are presented to the public and public comments are solicited on the proposed activities.

Findings: The project is generally consistent with the Northwest Power Planning Council's Fish and Wildlife Program, as well as BPA's Watershed Management Program EIS (DOE/EIS-0265) and ROD. This Supplement Analysis finds that: 1) implementing the proposed action will not result in any substantial changes to the Watershed Management Program that are relevant to environmental concerns; and 2) there are no significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the Watershed Management Program or its impacts. Therefore, no further NEPA documentation is required.

/s/ Kimberly R. St Hilaire

Kimberly R. St.Hilaire

Environmental Protection Specialist – KEC-4

CONCUR:

/s/ Katherine S. Pierce

Katherine S. Pierce

NEPA Compliance Officer

DATE: July 28, 2006

Attachments:

NEPA Compliance Checklist

USFWS Species Letter, Snake River Fish and Wildlife Office, June 7, 2006

BPA HIP BO Approval letter

cc: (w/ attachments)

Ms. Lynn Rasmussen, Biologist, Nez Perce SWCD, P.O. Box 131, Culdac, ID 83832