

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Redfish Lake Short Access Road (Spur Road) Project

Fish and Wildlife Project No.: 2007-402-00

Project Manager: Jonathan McCloud

Location: Custer County, Idaho

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.13 Pathways, short access roads, and rail lines

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to provide partial funding to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) for materials and construction of a short access road (spur road) along Redfish Lake Creek, approximately five miles south of Stanley, Idaho on property administered by the Sawtooth National Recreation Area, Sawtooth National Forest (SNF).

The spur road would extend off of the Redfish Lake Complex Road and Bridge Reconstruction project that was implemented by the SNF in 2015. That project relocated a bridge and road along Redfish Lake Creek, and as a result, IDFG's access to Redfish Lake Creek for spring release of sockeye salmon smolts was eliminated. BPA was not involved in the Redfish Lake Complex Road and Bridge Reconstruction project.

The spur road project would begin at the existing Redfish Lake Road, and run southeasterly towards Redfish Lake Creek for approximately 150 feet. The spur road would be approximately 12 feet wide, and would be located entirely within uplands, with an approximate 50-foot width of streamside riparian vegetation separating the road from the creek. The path of the road would take advantage of the existing natural opening in the lodgepole pine stand. Construction activities would include the use of heavy machinery to clear vegetation, grub to a depth of one foot below the existing ground contours, grade, shape, and compact the road bed. Geotextile fabric would be laid down, and a mix of granular and aggregate gravel fill would be placed.

The spur road would be used exclusively by IDFG during their annual spring sockeye releases, and then barred from use during the remainder of the year. Vegetation is expected to occupy the surface of the pullout within a few seasons.

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/ Jenna Peterson

Jenna Peterson

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason

Stacy L. Mason

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: March 7, 2016

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: Redfish Lake Short Access Road (Spur Road) Project

Project Site Description

The project area is located within a riparian conservation area along Redfish Lake Creek approximately five miles south of Stanley, Idaho on property administered by the Sawtooth National Recreation Area (Sawtooth NRA), Sawtooth National Forest (SNF). The majority of the area is forested by lodgepole pine greatly affected by the mountain pine beetle which has caused die-off of the overstory. The project area is adjacent to a new bridge and road that were constructed in 2015. The spur road would be located entirely within uplands, with an approximate 50-foot width of streamside riparian vegetation separating the road from Redfish Lake Creek. The path of the road would take advantage of the existing natural opening in the lodgepole pine stand.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Explanation: SNF was the lead federal agency for Sec 106 consultation. ID SHPO concurrence on no effect determination received 12/11/15.

2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Explanation: Soil disturbance would occur as part of the construction of the spur road, but would be limited in duration and scale to the footprint of construction activities. Erosion and sediment control measures would be utilized, and best management practices would be followed to prevent unnecessary ground disturbance and to retain and contain any exposed soils.

3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Explanation: The Sawtooth NRA provides habitat for Ute ladies'-tresses orchid, which is not known to occur within the project area. The Sawtooth NRA has known occurrences and/or provides habitat for 34 Sensitive and Watch plant species; however, there are no known occurrences of these species or habitat within the spur road project area.

SNF was the lead federal agency for Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation for this project. SNF amended their decision for the 2011 Section 7 consultation for the Redfish Lake Complex Road and Bridge Reconstruction Project to include the current proposed spur road project. The determination was made that the additional disturbance resulting from the inclusion of the small spur road project, and further permanent occupancy within the riparian conservation area would be minimal and within the scope of action and effects that were subject of the 2011 consultation. SNF determined that re-initiation of consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is not warranted. Email 10/15/15, determination letter 10/6/15.

The project has been designed to take advantage of the natural opening in the lodgepole pine stand which would minimize the need for vegetation removal; fewer than five mature trees are anticipated to be removed. Tree removal would take place prior to May 1 to avoid disturbing ground-nesting avian species.

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



Explanation: The Sawtooth NRA provides habitat for Canada lynx, greater sage-grouse, and yellow-billed cuckoo. No lynx populations have been documented recently within the Sawtooth NRA; the most recent confirmed sightings occurred during the winter of 1997. No observations of greater sage-grouse have been documented within the project area. No potential habitat for yellow-billed cuckoo occurs within the project area due to lack of contiguous deciduous forests along Redfish Lake Creek.

SNF's ESA consultation for this project determined that the additional disturbance resulting from the inclusion of the spur road, including the further permanent occupancy within the riparian conservation area as well as loss of 0.1 acres of Canada Lynx habitat would be minimal and within the scope of action and effects that were subject of the 2011 consultation. SNF determined that re-initiation of consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is not warranted. Email 10/15/15, determination letter services 10/6/15.

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



Explanation: Redfish Lake Creek which contains ESA-listed Snake River sockeye, Chinook salmon, Snake River steelhead, and Columbia River bull trout, and Forest Service sensitive species westslope cutthroat trout is located approximately 50 feet from the project area. Typical erosion control best management practices will be implemented and no riparian habitat will be affected.

SNF's ESA consultation determined that the additional disturbance resulting from the inclusion of the small spur road project, and further permanent occupancy within the riparian conservation area, would be minimal and within the scope of action and effects that were subject of the 2011 consultation. SNF determined that re-initiation of consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service is not warranted. Email 10/15/14, determination letter dated 10/5/15.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: None present.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: No new wells or use of ground water proposed; maximum depth of disturbance would be approximately 10 feet; spill prevention measures would be present on site.

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



Explanation: Temporary impacts and the loss of 0.1 acres of Canada lynx habitat will be negligible with standard best management practices to the riparian conservation area and NRA. SNF determined that the additional impacts resulting from the inclusion of the small spur road project would be minimal and within the scope of action and effects that were considered as part of the Redfish Lake Complex Road and Bridge Reconstruction Project. Consistency determination with the Sawtooth National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan received from SNF on 3/07/2016.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: New gravel spur road would not be noticeably different than nearby existing access roads and pathways.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: Minimal amount of dust and vehicle emissions due to construction.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: Temporary construction noise during daylight hours. Operational noise would not change.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: Typical best management practices would be followed regarding inspecting machinery for fuel or lubricant leaks, vehicle refueling, and disposal of hazardous materials.

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

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: Coordination has occurred with SNF.

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

Signed: /s/ Jenna Peterson
Jenna Peterson
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: March 7, 2016