Upper Stillwaters and Stormy A Restoration Project

Finding of No Significant Impact

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
Bonneville Power Administration
May 2017

Summary

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) announces its environmental findings on funding of the Upper Stillwaters and Stormy A Restoration Project. Implementation of the Proposed Action would improve salmonid habitat along the Entiat River on land owned by the U.S. Forest Service in Chelan County, Washington.

The U.S. Forest Service (USFS), in cooperation with BPA, prepared and issued a document titled, "Upper Stillwaters and Stormy A Restoration Project on the Entiat River Final Environmental Assessment" (EA). The EA evaluated the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative. The comments received on the Draft EA and responses to the comments are included in the USFS document titled, "Final Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact for the Upper Stillwaters and Stormy A Restoration Project."

As a cooperating agency, BPA hereby adopts the Final EA. Based on the analysis in the EA, BPA has determined that the Proposed Action is not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 United States Code [USC] 4321 et seq.). Therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required and BPA is issuing this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Proposed Action.

The Final Decision Notice specifies the permits required to implement the proposed action would be obtained prior to construction. The Final Decision Notice also confirms that the environmental commitments defined as best management practices would be built into the proposed project or result from agency permit conditions to minimize impacts to environmental resources. The non-Federal sponsor, Yakama Nation, is responsible for these commitments and permit conditions, which are stipulated in the Final Decision Notice.

Public Availability

The Final EA and FONSI will be posted on BPA's project website *www.bpa.gov/goto/Stillwaters*.

Background

This action is needed because past and ongoing human actions, including those associated with past timber harvest and road building, within the floodplain of the Entiat River have confined the

river and made alterations to riparian and floodplain vegetation, reduced large wood availability and recruitment, reduced the number and quality of pools, and degraded fish habitat conditions. Large wood and pools in rivers provide important habitat to many aquatic species both in the main river channel and in side channels. Large wood provides shelter, hydraulic refuge, and creates pools with slow water that are important for rearing salmon and trout. Large wood increases food production by increasing invertebrate production. Wood also contributes to the creation of vegetated islands that are important nutrient inputs for many aquatic species. Side-channel habitat is important for juvenile fish rearing as refugia from high stream temperatures, predators, and high flows during spring runoff. The Entiat River historically produced large numbers of upper Columbia River spring Chinook salmon, steehead, and bull trout; however, past activities (such as dams, fishing, roads, timber harvest, grazing, etc.) have impacted stream habitat and fish populations to the extent that these species have been listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Recovery actions identified in the Upper Columbia Recovery Plan of which the US Forest Service is a key partner include; increase habitat diversity, reconnect floodplain and wetlands, restore riparian habitat, increase large woody debris (LWD).

The 2008 Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) Biological Opinion (BiOp), as supplemented in 2010 and 2014, includes actions to mitigate for the effects of development and operation of the FCRPS on fish listed under the Endangered Species Act. One of the actions recommended to the Action Agencies (Corps, BPA, and Bureau of Reclamation) in the FCRPS BiOp is to improve tributary habitat in areas like the Entiat River. Funding the implementation of this project assists BPA in meeting its commitments under the BiOp.

Proposed Action

The original Proposed Action was located along the Entiat River from RM 25.5 to RM 27.5 (Upper Stillwaters) and from RM 20.5 to 20.7 (Stormy A), within the Entiat Ranger District, Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. The Proposed Action has been reduced to only include the Upper Stillwaters portion, and not the Stormy A portion.

The revised Proposed Action would include:

- Removal of the existing levee and re-connection of the signal peak side channel near Entiat river mile 27.5, including excavation of the side channel between the inlet and outlet and placement of large wood within the channel to allow year around stream flow for rearing juvenile salmon and steelhead within the Entiat River.
- Riprap enhancement along the Entiat River road through construction of large wood structures bolted to boulders and placed along the toe of the riprap bank. These structures would be placed at three locations (between 100-300 linear feet per site) along the Entiat River Road between river miles 25.5 to 27.5.
- Construction of three engineered log structures within the Entiat River from RM 25.5 to RM 27.5 (Upper Stillwaters Reach).

The Proposed Action was modified and reduced because this alternative, in both the short- and long-term, best meets the purpose and need while minimizing the impacts to private land. There

were concerns raised during the scoping and comment periods that these projects, in addition to potential debris and runoff generated by post fire storm events, would impact private land and infrastructure downstream of USFS lands. As a result, the designs of each structure were analyzed to ensure their stability during a potential flood and debris flow. The structures in the Stormy A portion of the Proposed Action were removed because they had a potential of increasing flood flows on private lands.

Significance of Potential Impacts of the Proposed Action

Chapter 3 of the EA describes the affected environment and the current conditions of the project area and the environmental consequences of the Proposed Action. The current conditions were used to evaluate and predict the effects of implementing the Proposed Action in comparison to the No Action. The environmental consequences of the two alternatives present the potential effects on the physical, biological, and socioeconomic environment. The cumulative effects are also included in Chapter 3 of the EA.

The following discussion provides a summary of the potential impacts from the Proposed Action and the reasons these impacts would not be significant.

Hydrology and Soils

Overall effects to soils and geology would be low.

- Increases in turbidity and soil erosion during construction activities would be short term, while bank stabilization and native vegetation plantings would reduce the current stream bank erosion over the long term.
- Equipment fueling and servicing sites would be 150 feet or more from waterbodies or wetlands or on a hardened site that would be designated within the staging areas adjacent to Entiat River Road or on the northeast side of the road.
- Vehicle inspections and cleanings and the use of a fuel and chemical management plan would avoid or minimize adverse effects to soil, water quality, riparian resources, surface water, and ground water during project implementation.

Fisheries

Overall effects to fisheries would be low.

- In-water construction activities would take place during in-water work windows.
- Mitigation measures and BMPs would reduce the potential for erosion and runoff to enter the Entiat River, thus, reducing potential impacts to fish.
- Mitigation measures requiring the inspection and cleaning of construction equipment prior to entering and leaving the site would reduce the risk of introducing invasive aquatic species into the Entiat River.

- The improved habitat conditions resulting from the Proposed Action would lead to improved growth and survival of individual fish through enhanced spawning, incubation, rearing, and migration for fish species.

Botany

Overall effects to botany would be low.

- Reducing the amount of travel along access routes, careful selection and identification of access routes and Project Design Features requiring replanting of disturbed areas with local native species, and monitoring for invasive plant colonization would minimize the construction impacts on native plants.
- The project would benefit the native plant communities in the riparian area by increasing the amount of moist/wet riparian habitat available, increasing the cover of native plants along the rip-rapped banks, and providing more large wood substrates for mosses and lichens. This beneficial effect would be long term and would offset the short-term damage from construction activities.

Invasive Plants

Overall effects to invasive plants would be low.

- Cleaning of all equipment prior to entering the project area, pre- and post-treatment of invasive plants already in the project area, and monitoring of disturbed areas for new invaders would minimize the establishment and spread of invasive plants due to the proposed action.
- Project Design Features requiring rock and mulch materials from weed-free sources would minimize the potential for introducing new invasive species.

Recreation / Wild and Scenic River Eligibility

Overall effects to recreation and Wild and Scenic River eligibility would be low.

- Once completed, the addition of the large wood structures and the reconnection of the old side channel would be consistent with the current conditions along the river so changes to the scenic quality along the Entiat River would be minor, and likely not noticeable to most people.
- Because the construction period would only last several weeks, impacts on access to and availability of the one dispersed recreation site in the project area would be short term.
- While longer-term impacts such as channel-spanning logs becoming lodged between the new large wood structures would be possible, the use of bumper logs on all large wood structures is intended to minimize the potential of floating log capture.

Vegetation

Overall effects to vegetation would be low.

- Some trees would be removed from the less than half-acre forested area, as necessary, to facilitate levee removal (RM 27.5) along with accessing the log structure sites within the reconstructed side channel. Many of the trees removed during the implementation of the project would be incorporated into the constructed log features. These losses would be off-set by the planned re-vegetation of the disturbed sites with native trees, grass, forbs, and shrubs propagated from locally collected seed.

Wildlife

Overall effects to wildlife would be low.

- Because the work window extends from July 15-July 30, the potential for disturbance to nesting birds is reduced since most, if not all, species in the project area would be finished nesting by July 15.
- Short-term losses of vegetation do not include a reduction of any unique or important habitats of ESA-listed species. In addition, all disturbed areas would be revegetated with native plants.

Heritage Resources

Overall effects to heritage resources would be low.

- A cultural resource survey showed that previously recorded sites near the project would not be affected.
- If unanticipated sites are discovered during construction, all work would cease pending review by a cultural resource specialist and, as needed, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation.

Determination

Based on the information in the EA, as summarized here, BPA determines that the Proposed Action is not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of NEPA (42 USC 4321 *et seq.*). Therefore, an EIS will not be prepared and BPA is issuing this FONSI for the Proposed Action.

Issued in Portland, Oregon

/s/ F Lorraine Bodi — *May 31, 2017*

F Lorraine Bodi
Vice President
Environment, Fish and Wildlife

Date