Clark Fork River Delta Restoration Project
Finding of No Significant Impact
Bonneville Power Administration
DOE/EA-1969
July 2014

SUMMARY

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) announces its environmental findings for its proposal to provide partial funding to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game's (IDFG) Clark Fork River Delta Restoration Project. The project would involve installing shoreline erosion control measures, installing structures to redirect local water flow, raising islands, deepening channels, establishing vegetation and controlling weeds at the Clark Fork River delta, located in Bonner County, Idaho at the confluence of the Clark Fork River and Lake Pend Oreille.

BPA, in cooperation with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), prepared an environmental assessment (EA) evaluating the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative. 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 Proposed Action is not the type of action that normally requires preparation of an EIS and is not without precedent. The BLM and the Corps have prepared their own agency-specific NEPA decision documents for the project.

The comments received on the Draft EA and responses to the comments are included in the EA. The EA also identifies changes made to the Draft EA.

The attached Mitigation Action Plan lists all of the mitigation measures that BPA and IDFG are committed to implementing as part of the Proposed Action. The FONSI also includes a statement of findings on how the Proposed Action impacts wetlands and floodplains. Impacts to wetlands and floodplains would be avoided where possible and minimized by the mitigation measures (see attached Mitigation Action Plan) where there is no practical alternative.

PUBLIC AVAILABILITY

This FONSI will be mailed directly to individuals who previously requested it, a notification of availability will be mailed to other potentially affected parties, and the EA and FONSI will be posted on BPA's project website www.bpa.gov/goto/ClarkForkRiverDelta

PROPOSED ACTION

Under the Proposed Action, BPA would provide partial funding for the project as part of its efforts to mitigate for the effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System on fish and wildlife in the mainstem Columbia River and its tributaries as part of its duties under the Northwest Power Act. IDFG would implement shoreline erosion control measures. The restoration would be divided into five areas spread over 1,200 acres. Restoration elements would include installing bank armor and protection, river training structures, and breakwaters, as well as raising islands, forming channels, establishing vegetation, and controlling weeds.

Construction activities would require using an existing staging area, developing a new staging area, improving existing access roads, installing temporary access roads (some would be removed, others would be buried and incorporated into the erosion control features), and installing and removing a floating bridge and a river crossing channel made of rock.
The project would help reduce rates of erosion, retain wetland habitats, and improve habitat quality for fish, wildlife and vegetation. The project would add habitat complexity with large woody debris; promote diverse native riparian vegetation growth such as black cottonwood, dogwood, and willow; reduce nonnative invasive reed canarygrass; and control other invasive species.

Construction is expected to begin in August 2014, and last approximately 8 months, ending in April 2015. It is possible that work may need to be spread out over multiple seasons due to Lake Pend Oreille water elevation fluctuations affecting access to project areas and the need for additional funding to complete the project.

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Action Alternative, BPA would not provide funding for the project and IDFG would not implement the project as described in the EA.

Under the No Action Alternative, IDFG would likely pursue smaller scale restoration activities with non-federal funding, but the extent of those activities would be dependent on the ability to find additional funding or funding partners. If restoration does not occur, shorelines of the Clark Fork River delta would continue to erode resulting in degradation and loss of remaining fish and wildlife habitat.

SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

To determine whether the Proposed Action has the potential to cause significant environmental effects, the potential impacts on human and natural resources were evaluated and presented in Chapter 3 of the EA. To evaluate potential impacts, four impact levels were used – high, moderate, low, and no impact. These impact levels are based on the considerations of context and intensity defined in the Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1508.27). High impacts could be considered significant impacts, if not mitigated, while moderate and low impacts are not. The Proposed Action would have no significant impacts.

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

GEOLGOY AND SOILS

Impacts to geology and soils would be low.

- Mitigation measures (use of sediment barriers, reseeding disturbed areas, covering stockpiled excavated materials, etc.) would minimize the risk of soil erosion during construction and would aid in soil recovery.
- Impacts from excavation, importing rock material, embankment and slope construction and grading would result in some temporary erosion or soil loss and would be mitigated through best management practices (BMPs).
- Riprap slope protection and placement of woody debris would reduce the potential for wave action to erode lakebed and banks, decreasing the rate of soil loss.
- Raised ground surfaces would result in an increase of protected soil resources at elevations available for vegetative growth.
- Excavation would be limited to areas not containing heavy metal contaminated soils; and contaminated areas would be marked prior to project implementation and avoided. Buffers zones, extending from contaminated areas to non-contaminated areas, would be identified; no excavation would occur within the buffer zones.

VEGETATION AND WETLANDS

Impacts to vegetation and wetlands would be low.

- Existing wetlands would be restored and converted from sparsely vegetated to partially vegetated or vegetated wetlands.
- Newly created island surfaces where land is currently submerged would increase native plant communities, including wetlands.
- Most construction zones are sparsely vegetated and dominated by invasive plants and all disturbed areas above the high-water mark would be reseeded and replanted.
- Slope protection, the placement of woody debris and the creation of new island surfaces would help establish forested and scrub-shrub wetland and riparian areas where they do not currently exist. Reduced erosion and scouring wave action would curtail the ongoing loss of vegetation through erosion.
- The removal of invasive species would increase the ability for native species to establish.

WATER RESOURCES

Impacts to water resources would be low to moderate.

- Temporary water quality impacts, such as sediment plumes from soil disturbance and water temperature increases from vegetation removal, would be minimized through the implementation of BMPs to reduce erosion and runoff during construction activities, help stabilize disturbed areas by replacing vegetation, and reduce potential turbidity.
- Installation of river training structures and breakwaters would reduce the potential for wave action to erode banks, decreasing suspended-sediment concentrations.

- Establishment of vegetation would reduce releases of sediment into surface water and improve water quality.
- Installation of large woody debris would disrupt flow (reduce velocity) and redirect flow away from islands, reducing erosion and suspended sediment in the system. Woody debris would also trap sediments, removing them from adjacent water bodies.
- Although the addition of fill and riprap would incrementally reduce flood-storage capacity and the removal of vegetation could temporarily impact floodplain functions until areas are re-vegetated , overall the project would benefit the floodplain by protecting the existing floodplain from eroding into the delta.

FISH AND WILDLIFE

Impacts to fish and wildlife would be low.

- In-water construction activities would take place during in-water work windows when bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout are unlikely to be in the area.
- Activities related to raising islands would occur during the dry season and at low lake levels.
- Mitigation measures and BMPs would reduce the potential for erosion and runoff to enter the Clark Fork River and Lake Pend Oreille, thus, reducing potential impacts to fish.
- Noise and vibration impacts to fish due to pier anchoring activities would be minimized through mitigation measures (including use of a wood block or bubble curtain).
- 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 Clark Fork River and Lake Pend Oreille.
- Although equipment would be mobilized during migratory birds breeding times, no construction activities would take place during this time (August – September).
- No work would occur near the known bald eagle nest on the south side of Area 7 during the breeding season (February 1 – July 31).
- The creation of a more channelized system containing areas of thermal refugia and habitat complexity would have a positive impact on fish and wildlife habitat.

LAND USE AND RECREATION

Impacts to land use and recreation would be low.

- There would be no change in land use or land ownership as a result of the project.
- Signage would be posted notifying the public of the construction schedule and accessibility.
- Although public access to Drift Yard Road and the Clark Fork River Access Area would be restricted during construction activities, Johnson Creek Access Area and Denton Slough Boat Launch would be open to the public, and areas outside the designated construction area safety buffer would be accessible during project implementation.
- Waterfowl hunting would not be allowed within the delta islands during the construction seasons from August to April, but hunting would resume once construction is completed.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Impacts to cultural resources would be low.

- Historic and archaeological resources potentially eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places would be avoided.
- A cultural resources monitor would be present during construction activities that take place in close proximity to known avoidance areas.
- Cultural resources that would be buried as part of project activities would be protected by geotextile fabric prior to burial and protected against further erosion.
- Mitigation measures to mark avoidance areas and to stop work if cultural materials are revealed during construction would lessen potential cultural resource impacts.
- In the long-term, potential impacts to cultural resources would decline because sites in the delta would be protected against further erosion.

AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

Impacts to aesthetics and visual resources would be low to moderate.

- Due to limited public access and safety buffers around construction areas, views of construction activities would be limited to the waters of Lake Pend Oreille, the waters of the delta, and State Highway 200 (Idaho 200). Where the activities would be seen by the public, they would be temporary and seen for a limited amount of time.
- Project activities would limit erosion and enhance the natural vegetation of the delta, and reduce the appearance of a bare unvegetated shoreline.
- Vegetation management and plantings along island shorelines would increase habitat diversity and increase the presence of wildlife in the delta, both of which would have positive impacts on aesthetic and visual resources.

AIR QUALITY, CLIMATE CHANGE, NOISE, HAZARDOUS WASTE, AND PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

Impacts to air quality, climate change, noise, hazardous waste and public health and safety would be low, except for noise receptors within 2,000 feet of construction activities.

- Air quality impacts would be limited to the construction site, would be temporary in nature, and would not result in violations of air quality standards.
- Although construction would accelerate rates of soil organic matter decomposition and carbon emissions to the atmosphere in the short term, these impacts would be offset through long-term sediment accumulation and deposition.
- Greenhouse gas emissions would be below EPA's mandatory reporting threshold of 25,000 metric tons and would not represent a substantial change from current conditions.
- Temporary construction noise could be discernible at the closest offsite residences, but would not be discernible for recreationists because fishing areas would have limited access during construction and a safety buffer would be in place for boaters. Therefore, noise impacts would be temporary and low except for noise receptors within 2,000 feet of construction where the impact would be moderate.
- Potential hazardous waste and public health and safety impacts during construction would be mitigated with the construction safety practices identified in the EA and Mitigation Action Plan.

TRANSPORTATION

Impacts to transportation would be low.

- Traffic impacts from construction on Idaho 200 would be localized and temporary, and would result in less than one percent increase in traffic volume.
- Traffic control signs would be posted on Idaho 200 to alert motorists of construction traffic.
- The project construction schedule would be posted in local newspapers and websites.

SOCIOECONOMICS

Impacts to socioeconomics would be low.

- There would be no-to-few temporary employment opportunities during construction and no additional employment following completion of the Proposed Action.
- Most construction employment would be outside the busier summer tourist season, so existing local lodging is expected to be sufficient to accommodate non-local workers during construction.
- Some local procurement of equipment and spending by construction workers would have a low, positive impact on the regional economy during construction.
- Implementation of the restoration efforts would have no adverse or disproportionate impacts on environmental justice (minority or low-income) populations.

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 July 1, 2014

F. Lorraine Bodi
Vice President
Environment, Fish and Wildlife

Date

This page intentionally left blank.

Clark Fork River Delta Restoration Project
Mitigation Action Plan

MITIGATION ACTION PLAN

This Mitigation Action Plan (MAP) is part of the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Clark Fork River Delta Restoration Project. This project would involve installing shoreline erosion control measures, installing structures to redirect local water flow, raising islands, deepening channels, establishing vegetation and controlling weeds at the Clark Fork River delta, located in Bonner County, Idaho at the confluence of the Clark Fork River and Lake Pend Oreille.

The MAP is for the Proposed Action and includes all of the integral elements and commitments made in the Environmental Assessment (EA) to mitigate any potential adverse environmental impacts.

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) and the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) are responsible for implementing the mitigation measures during various phases of project construction. Relevant portions of this MAP will be included in the construction contract specifications. This will obligate the contractor to implement the mitigation measures identified in the MAP that relate to contractor responsibilities during construction and post-construction.

If you have any general questions about the project, contact the Project Manager, Lee Watts: toll-free telephone 800-282-313, direct telephone 503-230-4625, or email vlwatts@bpa.gov.

If you have questions about the MAP, contact the BPA lead for environmental review, Jenna Peterson: toll-free telephone 800-282-313, direct telephone 503-230-3018, or email jepeterson@bpa.gov.

The MAP may be amended if revisions are needed due to new information or if there are any significant project changes.

MITIGATION MEASURES

Minimization and mitigation measures have been identified to reduce potential impacts associated with the Proposed Action, and are provided below in Table 1.

Table 1. Mitigation Action Plan

Environmental Resource	Mitigation
Geology and Soils	• Use sediment barriers such as fences, silt curtains, weed-free straw matting/bales, or fiber wattles, as necessary, in all work areas to minimize soil loss. • Use water trucks to apply water where needed daily to the construction area to minimize air-borne soil loss. • Cover stockpiled excess excavated materials to minimize loss of soil from stockpiles. • Reseed and plant disturbed areas with appropriate native species, and control weeds, following construction. • Limit borrow excavations to areas where heavy metals contamination was not detected. • Mark locations of metals contamination to ensure there is an avoidance buffer around each location.
Vegetation and Wetlands	• Mark wetland habitats as avoidance areas on construction drawings and flag as no-work areas in the field prior to construction. • Reseed disturbed banks with native herbaceous grasses to prevent the spread of noxious weeds. • Wash all construction equipment prior to entering into and leaving the site to prevent the spread of noxious weeds. • Pull noxious weeds by hand or treat with herbicide approved for application in wetlands. • Plant portions of the riparian corridor with native shrubs. • Plant portions of islands dominated by reed canarygrass with willows, dogwoods, or other suitable species. • Reseed disturbed upland areas with appropriate native species following construction. • Plant shorelines with native shrubs and trees in areas where riparian shrubs and trees have been removed to accommodate construction equipment.
Water Resources	• Use sediment barriers such as fences, weed-free straw matting/bales, or fiber wattles, as necessary, in all work areas sloping toward the Clark Fork River or Lake Pend Oreille to intercept any surface flow that might transport sediment to the water bodies. • Stage construction equipment and materials landward of the top of the bank behind silt fencing that would designate grading and clearing areas. • Operate machinery, to the extent feasible, from the top of the bank along adjacent uplands and previously cleared areas. • Develop a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan to reduce stormwater and erosion from construction areas as well as describe how hazardous material will be disposed of and handled. • Store construction fuel offsite and refuel equipment within temporary secondary containment in the staging area, no closer than 50 feet from water bodies. • Operate refueling areas using BMPs and equip these areas with appropriate spill containment systems constructed to contain

Table 1. Mitigation Action Plan

Environmental Resource	Mitigation
	110% of the volume of fuel stored within the fuel tanks. • Use water trucks to apply water where needed daily to the construction area for dust control. • Wash all equipment before it is delivered to the job site. • Inspect equipment to remove vegetation and dirt clods that may contain noxious weed seeds. • Inspect machinery daily for fuel or lubricant leaks. • Cover and stockpile excess excavated materials away from water bodies and flank with sediment fencing to minimize opportunity for fine sediment to be transported into water bodies. • Transport surplus excavated materials off site to an approved receiving location to be determined by the contractor and approved by BPA and IDFG. • Protect existing riparian/wetland vegetation, to the extent possible. • Implement contaminated sediment avoidance measures as described for geology and soils.
Fish and Wildlife	• Install interpretive signage, if desired, that includes facts on riparian-dependent wildlife species that may be present in the project vicinity. • Minimize the construction area, to the extent practicable. • No construction activities would occur during nighttime hours and prior to 30 minutes after dawn or continue any later than 30 minutes before dusk. • No construction would occur during the migratory bird breeding season. • Conduct work below the Ordinary High Water Mark (OHWM) from approximately October 15 through April 1 as approved by IDFG. • Operate machinery for below-OHWM construction from the top of the streambank along adjacent upland areas, to the extent possible. • Conduct excavation for installation of the weir abutments and other similar features from the bank, or below the OHWM in the dry season, to the extent possible. • Retrofit hydraulically-operated equipment that may work below the OHWM with vegetable-based fluid in the hydraulic system. • Protect existing riparian/wetland vegetation, to the extent possible. • Install a wood block and bubble curtain for underwater sound attenuation prior to anchoring the bridge to the lake bed.

Table 1. Mitigation Action Plan

Environmental Resource	Mitigation
Land Use and Recreation	• Notify recreational users of the schedule of construction activities and the potential effects on recreation activities, as follows: – Post notices in newspapers and websites, including the construction schedule and timing, availability of parking, and any areas that will be inaccessible. – Post notifications prior to the start of the October work window below the OHWM. • Install signage at all public access points into the project area, including water access from Lake Pend Oreille and the Clark Fork River.
Cultural Resources	• Mark known cultural resource sites as avoidance areas on construction drawings and flag as no-work areas in the field prior to construction. • Have a cultural resources monitor present on-site during construction activities that would take place in close proximity to known avoidance areas. • Protect cultural resources that would be buried as part of project activities by laying down geotextile fabric on top of the resources prior to burial. • Prepare an Archaeological/Cultural Resource Inadvertent Discovery Plan. • Protect any unanticipated cultural resources discovered during construction as follows: – Stop all work; cover and protect find in place. – Notify IDFG Project Manager, BPA Cultural Resources Specialist, and Corps/BLM Archaeologists immediately. – Implement mitigation or other measures as instructed by BPA.
Aesthetics and Visual Resources	• Retain existing vegetation, when possible, to visually screen new disturbances, during construction. • Reseed and plant disturbed areas with appropriate native species, and control weeds, following construction.
Air Quality and Climate Change	• Use dust abatement measures (for example, watering trucks), and apply idling restrictions during construction to minimize impacts to recreational users. • Regularly inspect, maintain, and replace (if defective) mufflers and other emission control devices on all construction equipment. • Apply gravel or rock on access roads before and during construction to minimize dust. • Reduce the speeds (for example, 5 mph) of construction vehicles on access roads to minimize dust.
Noise	• Limit construction noise to normal daytime working hours. If construction is necessary during other times, such as at night, limit activities generating noise to those absolutely necessary.

Table 1. Mitigation Action Plan

Environmental Resource	Mitigation
Hazardous Waste	• Inspect machinery daily for fuel or lubricant leaks. • Observe appropriate spill containment measures and buffer distances for fueling and hazardous material storage. • Have state-licensed applicators apply approved herbicides according to manufacturers' labels. • Do not use contaminated sediments in construction activities. • Dispose of non-hazardous wastes in approved landfills. • Dispose of hazardous wastes according to applicable federal and state laws. • Develop and follow the protocol for dealing with hazardous substances inadvertently discovered during project activities.
Public Health and Safety	• Follow the approved safety plan for construction. • Confine vehicle fueling and maintenance to approved locations.
Transportation	• Place signs on Idaho 200 to alert motorists of construction work. • Use flaggers where needed at ingress and egress points to direct traffic and avoid vehicle conflicts.
Socioeconomics	• Use local labor and materials, to the extent practicable. • Implement construction during winter to minimize effects to local tourism.

Note:
[a] Best Management Practices included in the *Biological Assessment for the Clark Fork River Delta Restoration Project* (IDFG, 2014a) are incorporated by reference into this EA.