

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** White Creek Fish Passage Improvement Project

**Project No.:** 1997-056-00

**Project Manager:** Joshua Ashline, EWU-4

**Location:** Klickitat County, Washington

**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 fund Yakama Nation Fisheries to complete a fish passage improvement project within the Yakama Nation Reservation, at the 191 Road crossing over White Creek. The work would restore adult and juvenile fish passage for Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed Mid Columbia Steelhead at one of the last remaining passage barriers in the White Creek watershed.

The project would include removal of three undersized culverts at the 191 Road crossing, and replace them with a single, clear-span 29-foot-long bridge. The stream is expected to be dry during construction. However, if flows are present, the work area would be isolated from stream flow using block nets. Fish salvage operations would occur within the isolated area, then the site would be dewatered and a sandbag berm would be used to divert streamflow to a diversion pump and pipe directing flows downstream of the work area. An excavator, back hoe loader, and crane truck would be used to remove the undersized culverts and excavate footings for the new bridge crossing. Pre-cast concrete footings and rock slope protection would be constructed along the stream banks. A 29-foot-long open span bridge deck would be placed atop the footings and backfilled with 6 inches of aggregate to match the existing 191 Road grade.

The project would be accessed via the existing 191 Road. Vehicle staging and refueling would occur at least 150-feet from White Creek. Temporary staging adjacent to the project area would be used to store materials and act as a platform for heavy equipment use. Following construction, all work areas would be returned to pre-construction conditions or better. Native seed mix would be planted in disturbed areas. Long-term monitoring and vegetation management could take place up to five years post-construction to ensure planting success.

These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with National Marine Fisheries Service on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System and Bonneville's commitments to the Yakama Nation under the 2020 Columbia River Fish Accord Extension agreement, while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the FCRPS on fish and wildlife in the mainstem Columbia River and its tributaries pursuant to the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act of 1980 (Northwest Power Act) (16 U.S.C. (USC) 839 et seq.).

**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/ Claire McClory

Claire McClory  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

<u>/s/ Katey C. Grange</u>	<u>September 23, 2021</u>
Katey C. Grange	Date
NEPA Compliance Officer	

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:** White Creek Fish Passage Improvement Project

## **Project Site Description**

The project is located on Yakama Nation Reservation land in south central Washington. White Creek is a tributary to the Klickitat River. Since the 1950s, the project area has been used for commercial timber harvest and cattle grazing. White Creek is typically dry from July-October each year.

Plant communities in the vicinity of the project generally consist of mature forest containing willow, black cottonwood, ponderosa pine, and ground cover such as spirea and snowberry. An extensive riparian floodplain is located just upstream of the White Creek 191 Road crossing.

## **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA determined that the implementation of the proposed undertaking would result in no historic properties affected (WA 2021 093). The Yakama Nation Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) concurred on September 22, 2021.

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary impact to soil from increased erosion potential during culvert removal and road grading activities. Sediment control BMPs would be installed prior to project implementation to minimize potential for in-stream turbidity or excessive runoff during construction. Post construction seeding and mulching would minimize long-term erosion potential.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status or ESA-listed plant species are known to be present. Temporary impact to existing vegetation during culvert removal is expected. Post construction seeding and monitoring would re-establish native riparian plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status or ESA-listed wildlife species are documented in or adjacent to the project area and no critical habitat is present. Local wildlife may be temporarily disturbed or displaced by construction noise and traffic. It is likely that species will avoid the area during construction and return once project work is complete.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project would result in about 15 cubic yards of cut and fill along the banks of White Creek. Equipment access and construction activities would take place during the dry season when flows are not likely to be present. Avoidance and minimization measures would be identified in the project Sponsor's Clean Water Act Section 404 Nationwide (application number NWP-2021-716), further reducing impact to waterways.

ESA-listed fish include mid-Columbia River steelhead. Work would occur during low or no flow periods. If flows are present, fish salvage and in-stream work area isolation measures would be utilized to minimize construction-related turbidity. The project is covered under the HIP Biological Opinion under Section 7 of ESA with Project Notification Form number 2021115. The project would result in long-term fish access to upstream spawning and rearing habitat in the White Creek basin.

### Notes:

- Project sponsor would adhere to all applicable site-specific conservation measures identified in the HIP consultation and approval.
- The Project sponsor would adhere to all avoidance and minimization efforts identified in the Clean Water Act permit issued for this project.

## **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: None present.

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impact expected because the stream bed is likely to be dry during construction, or isolated from stream flow if water is present. No long-term change to groundwater recharge potential.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Road 191 is in a remote part of the Yakama Nation Reservation that is minimally utilized. Temporary, negligible disruption to road access and use during construction. No long-term change to land use.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is not in a visually sensitive area and the new bridge's appearance would be consistent with the existing road infrastructure.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in vehicle emissions and dust during construction. No long-term impacts to air quality.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in noise during daytime construction activities due to vehicles and equipment use. No long-term impacts to noise.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impact expected.

### **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 is within the bounds of the Yakama Nation Reservation. Yakama Nation Fisheries would obtain necessary approvals to conduct work on tribal property.

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

Signed: /s/ Claire McClory September 23, 2021  
Claire McClory, ECF-4 Date  
Environmental Protection Specialist