

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Methow River Suspension Reach Fish Habitat Enhancement Project

Project No.: 2009-003-00

Project Manager: Tori Bohlen - EWU-4

Location: Okanogan 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 (YNF) to implement the Methow River Suspension Reach Fish Habitat Enhancement Project on state and private property near Mazama, Washington. The goal of the project is to enhance adult spawning and juvenile rearing habitat for Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed Upper Columbia River (UCR) spring Chinook salmon and UCR Steelhead. Columbia River bull trout and west slope cutthroat trout habitat would also benefit from this project.

The project proposes to install 10 large wood structures (six bank buried, two piling ballasted and three apex structures) along a 0.6 mile stretch of the Methow River to increase pool quantity and quality, gravel sorting, and retention of alluvial material. The structures would consist of about 230 pieces of imported large wood with rootwads and 95 timber piles. Two of the structures would be installed on the bank above and one below an abutment of a suspension foot bridge on the south side of the Methow River to increase bank stability and resist toe erosion while also increasing in-stream habitat complexity. Instream work would occur at the apex structure sites and construction would be isolated from flow in the channel by use sheet pile cofferdams. The project would occur during the summer of 2022 with instream work occurring during the July in-water work period. To minimize impacts to riparian vegetation and recreation, a heavy lift helicopter would be used to fly large wood to within reach of each of the project sites. An excavator would be used to bank bury and/or install piling ballast at the structures. Access and staging areas would occur via existing roads and previously disturbed areas, and short temporary access routes to reach proposed large wood structure sites. All areas disturbed during construction would be planted with native vegetation.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp). These actions would also support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System.

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/Brenda Aguirre
Brenda Aguirre
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

<u>/s/ Katey C. Grange</u>	<u>April 12, 2022</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: Methow River Suspension Reach Fish Habitat Enhancement Project

Project Site Description

The project area is located in a rural area along the Methow River (River Mile 63), approximately 2.0 miles southeast of Mazama, Washington. The project would occur on state-owned aquatic lands and private property. The project area encompasses 0.6 miles of the river and up to 600 feet of riparian area on both sides of the river, and includes a helicopter and materials staging area and heavy equipment and vehicle access routes. Vegetation types and land use in the project area consist of riparian forest stands interspersed with areas of scrub/shrub and pastureland. Adjacent properties are rural residential and agricultural pasturelands. There is a residence, several access roads, a levee and community recreational trail system on the south side of the river, and access roads and a continuation of the recreational trail system on the north side of the river. A suspension foot bridge, for the recreational trail, crosses the river within the middle of the project area. A small portion of an access route lies within the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest on the north side of the river. Recreation within the Methow River in this location is classified as low with occasional fishing. The project area has been heavily manipulated by historic residential and agricultural use, which has depleted the riparian area and river of large wood.

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: WA SHPO concurrence on BPA's determination of no historic properties affected was received on March 7, 2022. Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Okanogan County, WDNR, WDFW, and Okanogan National Forest were consulted. BPA received a non-Section 106 related response from Okanogan County on March 11, 2022. No other responses were received.

Notes:

- A cultural resources monitor would be present during ground-disturbing activities.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction of temporary access routes, installation of cofferdams, and excavation of bank materials to implement project elements would disturb soils. Erosion control BMPs would be installed prior to project implementation to minimize potential for in-stream turbidity or excessive runoff during construction. All excavated soils would remain onsite and be used as fill material within the large wood structures. Post construction site restoration measures would further minimize erosion potential, and provide long-term stability to soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status plant species or habitats are present in the project area. The project is designed to minimize impacts to vegetation by use of a helicopter to fly wood to each site. Existing vegetation would be selectively removed during construction, and areas disturbed as a result of construction of temporary access and excavation of banks for placement of large wood structures would be planted with native vegetation suitable for the project area, resulting in long term benefit to the riparian vegetation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status species wildlife have been documented in, or adjacent to, the project area; and no designated habitat is present. Wildlife may be temporarily disturbed by construction noise and increased traffic during locally approved daylight hours.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Concerns

Explanation: Project construction would create temporary disturbance to the Methow River.

Disturbance would be concentrated in the immediate vicinity of the active worksites. Fish would be subject to temporary noise and elevated turbidity associated with installation of structures instream and along the banks. The proposed project would be done in accordance with BPA's HIP biological opinion for effects to federally-listed UCR spring Chinook salmon and steelhead, and Columbia River bull trout. A HIP Project Notification Form was submitted to the Services on February 9, 2022 to address conservation measures for these species. State special-status fish species in the project area include Pacific lamprey, coho salmon, West slope cutthroat trout, rainbow and inland redband trout. HIP conservation measures implemented to minimize impacts to federally-listed species, would also minimize impacts to the state special-status species.

Notes:

- YNF would obtain a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit and Section 401 water quality certification prior to implementation of in-water work.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands would be disturbed. The project has been designed to avoid adverse impacts to wetlands. Installation of large wood structures is expected to result in expansion of existing wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or use of groundwater is proposed; depth of disturbance is not anticipated to draw down groundwater levels; spill prevention measures would be present on site to reduce the risk of groundwater contamination.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary impact to recreation users due to a two-day access closure during construction in the immediate project area. No long-term change to existing land use would

occur. The project is on privately-owned and Washington Department of Natural Resources lands.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The newly-installed large wood structures would be visually consistent with adjacent vegetation and the topography of the surrounding area, and would not be located in a visually sensitive area. Any change to the visual quality due to the helicopter and construction vehicles or equipment would be short term and temporary.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A temporary increase in emissions and dust from the helicopter and construction vehicles accessing the project site would be short term during construction and would resume to normal conditions immediately once the project is completed.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would result in a temporary increase in ambient noise. Any noise emitted from the helicopter and construction equipment would be short term and temporary during daylight hours and would cease following project completion.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would result in up to two days of closure of the trails to non-essential traffic while helicopter operations are being conducted. Construction warning signs and road guards would be utilized during project activities to provide for public and worker safety within the active construction site. All personnel would follow approved safety standards for working near or with a helicopter and project construction equipment.

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: YNF would complete the project on lands owned by those who have consented to allow the sponsor to enter their property. The YNF has coordinated with the USFS for use of the portions of the access road crossing USFS-managed lands.

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

Signed: /s/ Brenda Aguirre April 12, 2022
Brenda Aguirre, ECF-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist