

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Twisp Ponds Inlet Constructed Riffle Project

Project No.: 2010-001-00

Project Manager: Jamie Cleveland, 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 the Methow Salmon Recovery Foundation (MSRF) to implement the Twisp Ponds Inlet Constructed Riffle Project, an aquatic habitat enhancement project in the Twisp River and on private property near Twisp, Washington. The project would restore a perennial connection to off-channel rearing habitat for Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed Upper Columbia spring Chinook and summer steelhead at an existing inlet where flooding has lowered the river channel and diminished flows during low flow periods.

The proposed work would involve the construction of a fish-passable roughened riffle (dimensions: 55 feet long by 80 feet wide with a maximum fill depth of 2 feet) and the placement of 80 cubic yards of streambed gravels and 120 boulders in about 3,500 square feet to raise the low flow stage at the side channel inlet. Access to the site would be along an existing unimproved road that runs along the top of an existing levee. All staging and refueling would take place in an area adjacent to the Twisp River Road that is over 180 feet from the ordinary high water mark. Construction would require building a temporary access ramp down the face of the levee next to the existing concrete diversion structure. This access ramp would be removed upon project completion. Proposed work would require water control cofferdams to isolate the work area in two stages during construction. Cofferdams would be constructed within the active channel of the Twisp River. The project would occur during the summer of 2021 with in-water work occurring during the in-water work window.

Funding the proposed monitoring would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with the National Marine Fisheries Service and United States Fish and Wildlife Service on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System and supports 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/ Brenda Aguirre

Brenda Aguirre
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange June 24, 2021

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: Twisp Ponds Inlet Constructed Riffle Project

Project Site Description

The project area is located in a rural residential area along the Twisp River about 1.0 mile west of Twisp, Washington on private property and in the river. MSRF maintains a surface diversion intake and canal through and across the residential property via an easement to supply surface water to their Twisp Ponds property immediately downstream. The inlet feeds a 0.5-mile-long side channel network with about 3.5 acres of side channel, wetland and pond habitat. The Twisp Ponds property is open to the public as a nature conservancy area. Adjacent properties are rural residential. Mature riparian vegetation exists along the river and includes a mix of alder, cottonwood and pine trees with a scrub understory. There is a residence, several access roads, a levee and the diversion intake and irrigation canal on the private property. Recreation in the area along the Twisp River is classified as low with occasional fishing.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA sent its determination of no adverse effect on May 6, 2021 to WA SHPO and interested tribes. WA SHPO concurrence on no adverse effect determination was received on June 14, 2021. Colville Tribes and Yakima Nation were consulted. Colville Tribes responded and concurred June 10, 2021. Yakima Nation - no response.

Notes:

- Project sponsor would adhere to an Inadvertent Discovery Plan.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Short-term, temporary increase in soil erosion potential from temporary access ramp construction, installation of cofferdams, and channel excavation for installation of the roughened riffle. The inlet condition would be configured to sustain low-flow connection to surface water. Existing riparian vegetation would not be removed during construction, and areas disturbed as a result of construction would be planted with native upland and riparian plant and seed mixes suitable for the project area, resulting in long-term stability to soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed or special-status plant species are known to exist on the site. Existing riparian vegetation would not be removed during construction, and areas disturbed as a result of construction would be planted with native upland and riparian plant and seed mixes suitable for the project area, resulting in long term benefit to plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary impacts to local wildlife habitat from construction noise are expected. ESA-listed species include Canada lynx, grizzly bear and yellow billed cuckoo and state special-status species include the gray wolf, however; these species are not known to occupy the project area.

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 disturb approximately 0.08 acres of water in the Twisp River. MSRF obtained a Clean Water Act Section 404 permit under NWP 27 (NWP-2021-569) on June 21, 2021, and Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife Hydraulic Project Approval on June 16, 2021. Fish would be subject to temporary noise and elevated turbidity associated with installation of the roughened riffle. ESA-listed fish species include bull trout, spring Chinook, and summer steelhead. The project is covered under the HIP ESA Section 7 Biological Opinion with Project Notification Form number 2021053. State special-status species include Pacific lamprey, coho salmon, West slope cutthroat trout, rainbow and inland redband trout. The project would maintain fish passage at all times around the coffer dams.

Notes:

- Project sponsor would adhere to all applicable site-specific conservation measures identified in the HIP consultation and approval, including turbidity monitoring requirements and in-water work timing.
- Project sponsor would adhere to all applicable avoidance and minimization efforts identified in the Clean Water Act 404 permit and Hydraulic Project Approval issued for this project.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impact to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The water table is expected to be low during base flow conditions. Potential for temporary, minor disturbance to groundwater recharge during site isolation for the roughened riffle construction work.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The Twisp River is occasionally used for fishing. Public access to the project area would be limited during construction and site isolation from the construction site would not impact people passing through to fish in the river.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor changes to visual quality. The roughed riffle would be visually consistent with topography of the Twisp River channel. The project is not located in a visually sensitive area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in emissions and dust from vehicles accessing the site during construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in ambient noise during construction.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work is not considered hazardous nor would it result in any health or safety risks to the general public.

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 sponsor has been working closely with the private property owner for this project and with the adjacent landowners.

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 June 24, 2021
Brenda Aguirre, ECF-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist