

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** YTAHP Naches at Edgar Riparian Enhancement & Pump Screen Project

**Project No.:** 2007-398-00

**Project Manager:** Michelle O'Malley, EWU-4

**Location:** Yakima 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 North Yakima Conservation District (NYCD) of the Yakima Tributary Access and Habitat Program (YTAHP) to implement the Naches at Edgar Riparian Enhancement and Pump Screen Project on private land near Yakima, Washington. The purpose of the project is to create a protected riparian buffer along the Naches River and to supplement the existing vegetation to help create species diversity and habitat for Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed steelhead and bull trout, as well as Chinook salmon, coho salmon, and a suite of resident fishes.

NYCD would install approximately 250 potted trees and shrubs native to the area in a 3.69-acre riparian area along the Naches River. The planting area would be prepared with mechanical weed control methods, as well as the application of fabric mulch to control future weed growth around newly planted trees and shrubs. Plantings would be spaced 12 feet apart, and planted at a depth of 12-15 inches. Species to be included in the planting are black cottonwood, coyote willow, golden currant, choke cherry, and ponderosa pine. Following initial planting efforts, the area may be revisited in subsequent years to maintain plantings, which may include herbicide treatment, manual and mechanical weed treatments, and additional plantings. In addition, approximately 500 feet of new livestock exclusion fencing would be installed to create a buffer; posts would be installed at a depth of 3 feet. Approximately 1,300 feet of fence would be replaced to maintain livestock exclusion from the river. A pump screen would also be installed, but pump screen installation would not result in any ground disturbance. All access and staging areas for the project activities would occur along existing roads. NYCD would implement the activities in the fall/winter of 2022.

Funding the proposed activities would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Columbia River System Biological Opinions, while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the development and operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System on fish and wildlife in the 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/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

September 9, 2022

Date

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:** YTAHP Naches at Edgar Riparian Enhancement & Pump Screen Project

## **Project Site Description**

The project site is located on the Naches River at River Mile (RM) 10 within the Naches River Subbasin of the Yakima River Basin. Naches River is a tributary to the Yakima River at RM 116. The legal description of the project site is T13N, R18E, Sec 6. The surrounding area is used for agricultural crop production, grazing, and rural residential.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (YN) on May 18, 2022 (WA 2022 117). DAHP provided concurrence with the Area of Potential Effects (APE) on May 19, 2022, and the YN provided concurrence on May 27, 2022. BPA sent a determination of no effect to historic properties with stipulations to the consulting parties on July 20, 2022. Both the YN and DAHP requested an update to the survey report on July 22, 2022, and July 26, 2022, respectively. BPA updated the report and sent copies to the consulting parties on August 4, 2022. DAPH concurred with the update report on August 5, 2022. No response was received from the YN within the 30-day comment period, which ended on September 4, 2022.

Notes:

- An Inadvertent Discovery Protocol, which would outline the process to be followed in the event of a post-review discovery during construction, would be distributed to personnel associated with riparian enhancement work.
- Prior to the initiation of riparian enhancement, a cultural resources training would be held for the work crew by BPA to ensure they understand how to recognize artifacts and sensitive areas, and how to follow the Inadvertent Discovery Protocol should cultural materials be inadvertently discovered during construction.
- A 15-meter buffer would be identified and flagged for avoidance around the boundary of the archaeological site prior to the initiation of riparian enhancement work. No riparian enhancement or other ground-disturbing work would be conducted within this buffered area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some ground disturbance during planting and fence construction would occur where plants and fence posts were placed. Any impacts to soils as a result of the project would be short term. In the long term, there would be beneficial effects from stabilized banks due the improved vegetative conditions.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area has the potential to contain habitat for ESA-listed Whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*) and Umtanum Desert buckwheat (*Eriogonum codium*). There are no state-sensitive species or their habitats known to occur in the project area. The project would have no effect on federally-listed plant species due to lack of habitat and occurrence in the project area. The project is designed to minimize impacts to native vegetation. The project would have short-term effects on vegetation from planting, fencing, and screening actions due to digging and human trampling of some vegetation while working at and accessing work sites, but in the long term, there would be beneficial effects from restored or improved vegetative conditions.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area has the potential to contain habitat for ESA-listed Oregon spotted frog (*Rana pretiosa*), yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), Northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*), marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*), gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*) and Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), but based on habitat characteristics and species distribution, the project would have no effect on these ESA-listed species. There are no state-sensitive species or their habitats known to occur in the project area. Planting additional trees and shrubs within the riparian area and fencing around the area would involve removing minimal existing vegetation. Some disturbance to non-listed wildlife during project activities may occur due to human presence. Any impacts would be short term. Improved habitat conditions would result in long-term positive impacts, including increased riparian plant density and diversity, and habitat structure.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed Middle Columbia River steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) are present in the Naches River. There are no state-sensitive species or their habitats known to occur in the project area. Some disturbance to listed fish during project activities may occur due to human presence. Installation of the fish screen would be placed by hand on the pump intake hose in the dry (no in-water work) and the riparian planting and fencing would occur on the stream margins. Best management practices would also be utilized during project activities. Therefore, the proposed project activities would not impact ESA-listed species. Some disturbance to non-listed fish during project activities may occur due to human presence as well. Any impacts would be short term. Improved habitat conditions would result in long-term positive impacts, including increased riparian plant density and diversity, and habitat structure. Project screening, planting, and fencing are not expected to impact waterbodies or floodplains.

### 6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: None present in the project area.

## 7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project activities do not propose new wells or use of groundwater.

## 8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project activities do not propose changes to land use; designated farmlands would not be taken out of production.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project activities do not propose changes to visual quality; the riparian plantings and fencing would be visually consistent with agricultural lands and fencing adjacent to riparian areas. The project area is not within a visually sensitive area.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would generate small amounts of dust and vehicle emissions during planting, fencing, and placement of the fish screen.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be short-term implementation noise during daylight hours. This noise would not be noticeably different from the surrounding agricultural production noise.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project sponsor is required to use best management practices to protect worker health and safety. Any activities involving hazardous materials (treated wood posts) would be disposed of at a designated hazardous waste facility.

### **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: Implementation of project activities would not cause impacts to surrounding landowners. The project sponsor, NYCD, has coordinated with the underlying landowner and has permission to conduct project activities.

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  
Brenda Aguirre, ECF-4  
Environmental Protection Specialist

September 9, 2022  
Date