

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Skyline Fish Screen Replacement Project

Project No.: 2010-001-00

Project Manager: Verl Miller, EWM-4

Location: Okanogan County, WA

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: BPA proposes to fund WDFW to decommission the Skyline fish screen and build a new fish screen closer to the point of diversion. The current Skyline diversion is located on the Chewuch River, a tributary to the Methow River. A culvert delivers surface water to the forebay of the fish screen and fish become stranded during irrigation shut down because the culvert does not fully drain. There is no access into the culvert so complete fish removal is not possible. The fish bypass system is also a concern at this site because it drops over 20 vertical feet creating high velocity into the open bypass channel. The culvert and the fish bypass need modifications to prevent fish stranding and injury.

The existing diversion and fish screen would be replaced by a vertical plate fish screen, 15 feet long by 2 feet tall, in accordance with the National Marine Fisheries Service fish screen criteria, that would be closer to the point of diversion. The fish screen would be cleaned with an automated brush wiper system. There is already an access road to the new screen location, site access available for construction, and power is accessible. Work includes installing a new concrete fish screen vault and new sluice and bypass pipes to the river. The depth of excavation would be a maximum depth of 10 feet. The area of disturbance would be less than 0.5 acres. All work would be completed in the dry.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills ongoing commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Columbia River System Biological Opinions, while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System 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.

Ted Gresh
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
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.

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Project Site Description

The project site is located on U.S. Forest Service-managed land within the Chewuch River Watershed of the Upper Methow River Subbasin; between a road (FS-51) and the Chewuch River. The work area contains low shrubs with a few trees. The surrounding area is lightly forested.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA determined implementation of the proposed activity would have no potential to cause effects to cultural resources on May 15, 2024 (WA 2023 071)

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would generate small amounts of soil disturbance during construction. There would be no long-term impacts to existing soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status species are present. The project would have short-term effects on vegetation due to human trampling of some vegetation while working at, and accessing, the work site. There would be no long-term impacts to the existing vegetation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status species or designated critical habitat is present. Some increased noise and human presence would result in temporary disturbance to non-listed or sensitive wildlife during project activities may occur due to human presence. Any impacts would be short term.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed Upper-Columbia River steelhead, Upper-Columbia River Chinook, bull trout, and their designated critical habitat are present in the Chewuch River, which is adjacent to the project area. There would be no in-water work so no impacts during construction and the overall impact would be beneficial to all fish species by limiting the potential for entrainment. Project activities 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 activity does not propose new wells or use of groundwater.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project activity does not propose changes to land use and would not result in any land use disruptions during installation.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project activity does not propose changes to visual quality as the replacement screen would look similar as the existing screen to area observers.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would generate small amounts of dust and vehicle emissions while accessing and leaving the work site.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be some short-term construction noise during daylight hours.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities are not considered hazardous nor would result in any health or safety risks to the 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 would occur on USFS-managed land. The USFS is a project partner and has been involved in the planning process.

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

Signed:

Ted Gresh
Environmental Protection Specialist