

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: YTAHP Naches at Edgar Riparian Enhancement Phase 2 Project

Project No.: 2007-398-00

Project Manager: Jennifer Lord, EWM-4

Location: Yakima County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.2 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 Phase 2 Project on private land near Yakima, Washington. The purpose of the project is to create a protected riparian buffer along the Naches River with a combination of fencing and plantings to enhance existing vegetation in an effort to improve habitat for Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed steelhead and bull trout, as well as Chinook salmon, coho salmon, and a suite of resident fishes.

Project activities would include installation of 700 feet of livestock exclusion fence and the planting of approximately 100 potted native trees and shrubs within a 3.25-acre area along the Naches River. The new fence would include installation of fence posts that would be set in hand dug or auger holes that measure up to 3 feet deep. Trees and shrubs would be spaced 12 feet apart and planted at a depth of 12 to 15 inches using hand tools. Species to be included in the planting are black cottonwood, coyote willow, golden currant, choke cherry, rabbit brush, and ponderosa pine. Following initial planting efforts, the area may be revisited in subsequent years to control weed competition including use of manual and mechanical weed treatments, and to make additional plantings. Access and staging areas for the proposed activities would occur along existing roads. NYCD would implement the project in Fall 2024.

The proposed activities would support conservation of Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with the National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System. The proposed activities also support 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 (the Northwest Power Act) (16 USC (U.S.C.) 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.

Brenda Aguirre
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 the west side of the Naches River at River Mile (RM) 10 approximately one mile south of Glead, Washington and 2 miles northwest of Yakima, Washington. The 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 July 24, 2023 (WA 2023 141). DAHP provided concurrence with the Area of Potential Effects (APE) on July 27, 2023, and the YN provided concurrence on August 15, 2023, and requested survey of the APE. BPA sent a determination of no historic properties affected with stipulations to the consulting parties on July 10, 2024. DAHP concurred with BPA's determination of no historic properties affected on July 10, 2024. No other response was received within the 30-day comment period, which ended on August 9, 2024.

Notes:

- A Post-Review 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, BPA would hold a cultural resources training session for the work crew to ensure they understand how to recognize artifacts and sensitive areas, and how to follow the Post-Review Discovery Protocol should cultural materials be inadvertently discovered during construction. This training was carried out on October 28, 2024.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some ground disturbance during planting and fence construction would occur where plants and fence posts are placed. Any impact on 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 white bark 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 these 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 and fencing 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 vegetated wildlife habitat. 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 on the stream margins. No in-water work or access would occur during project activities. The proposed project activities would therefore 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 to fish, including increased riparian plant density and diversity, and habitat structure. Project 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: Project activities do not propose new wells or use of groundwater.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: 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: 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: Project activities would generate small amounts of dust and vehicle emissions during planting and fencing.

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:

Brenda Aguirre
Environmental Protection Specialist