

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Northern Pike Suppression and Monitoring

Location: Multiple counties in northern Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.20 Protection of cultural resources, fish and wildlife habitat; B3.3 Research related to conservation of fish, wildlife, and cultural resources

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife to expand the existing WDFW northern pike suppression and monitoring efforts within the blocked area above Grand Coulee Dam. Northern pike (*Esox Lucius*) are a highly invasive fish species that can reduce fish densities and cause large scale changes in fish communities through predation and competition for food resources. Since the establishment of northern pike in the blocked area of the upper Columbia River above Grand Coulee Dam, state, tribal, and local resource managers have coordinated efforts to develop and implement aggressive northern pike suppression and monitoring programs in Lake Roosevelt to prevent spread downstream of Grand Coulee Dam. These actions undertaken by WDFW would contribute to on-going regional efforts to control the spread of northern pike.

Existing (non-BPA funded) suppression efforts include the use of two boat crews for approximately two months of suppression and the fall monitoring survey (eDNA sampling, fish sampling, and review of fish count window data) that lasts about two weeks. Funding under this proposed action would support two fully staffed and equipped boat crews for three months of suppression, three boat crews for the fall monitoring survey and purchase and maintenance of equipment (nets and terminal gear, PPE, hardware, field equipment). Suppression and monitoring efforts would follow protocols outlined in the 2023 State of Washington Interagency Northern Pike Rapid Response Plan. Suppression techniques include fish removal via gill nets, electrofishing, beach seining, trap/pound nets, angling, and baited set lines.

Funding for these actions would support projects that contribute to the restoration of salmon and other native fish populations.

Findings: In accordance with Section 1021.102 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; 89 FR 34074, April 30, 2024; 90 FR 29676, July 3, 2025 [Interim Final Rule]) and *DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Implementing Procedures* (dated June 30, 2025), BPA has determined the following:

- 1) The proposed action fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021;
- 2) The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion; and

- 3) There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal (see attached Environmental Evaluation).

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.¹

Carolyn A. Sharp
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

¹ BPA is aware that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), on February 25, 2025, issued an interim final rule to remove its NEPA implementing regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500–1508. Based on CEQ guidance, and to promote completion of its NEPA review in a timely manner and without delay, in this CX BPA is voluntarily relying on the CEQ regulations, in addition to the interim final rule to revise DOE NEPA regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021 and NEPA Implementing Procedures (dated June 30, 2025), to meet its obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.

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: Northern Pike Suppression and Monitoring

Project Site Description

Lake Roosevelt is the waterbody created by the impoundment of the Columbia River behind the Grand Coulee Dam. It is designated as a National Recreation Area and supports extensive boating, fishing and other forms of aquatic recreation that can be a means for the spread of aquatic invasive fish, invertebrates and plant species. Water levels in Lake Roosevelt are managed for flood risk management, hydropower generation and other purposes as part of the Federal Columbia River Power System.

Established populations of northern pike in the state of Washington are currently limited to the Columbia River upstream of Grand Coulee Dam (i.e., Lake Roosevelt), Spokane River, and Pend Oreille River.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no ground disturbance or construction activities; therefore, there is no potential to cause effects to historic and cultural resources.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance would occur as a result of the proposed actions. Therefore, the proposed actions would not impact geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions do not include any vegetation management, ground disturbance, or work that would remove or substantially impact vegetation. Therefore, there is no potential to affect plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: State-listed sensitive species in Lake Roosevelt include the common loon, Columbia black-tailed deer and Roosevelt elk. Personnel may displace wildlife during suppression and monitoring activities due to elevated noise and human presence, but this would be temporary and would be consistent with noise and human presence associated with other lake and river users, such as recreationists. There would be no actions that would occur on upland areas; therefore, there would be little effect on wildlife and no effect to wildlife habitat.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No anadromous fish species are present due to anthropogenic blockages downriver of the project locations. ESA-listed bull trout and bull trout designated critical habitat are present in the Pend Oreille River. State-listed sensitive species include white sturgeon. WDFW would maintain an ESA Section 10 permit from USFWS to authorize bull trout take activities under this project.

To ensure minimal effects to native fish species during suppression efforts, placement of nets in and around the primary inlets and outlet of the water bodies would be avoided to reduce by-catch. Any native fish incidentally captured during project activities would be returned no more than 100 meters downstream of the capture location. All netting used for capturing, handling, and holding of fish would be composed of a fine mesh, knot-free material that would minimize injury to the fish. Handling of all ESA-listed species would be done as quickly as possible to minimize the risk of injury and mortality. To prevent the spread of invasive and non-native species, all equipment, clothing, and boots would be cleaned before arriving at a project area. Staff would take precautions to avoid stepping in areas that may be potential redd locations for resident bull trout.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities would not take place in wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance:

Explanation: No ground disturbance or water withdrawal would occur as a result of the proposed actions. Therefore, the proposed actions would not impact groundwater and aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change in land use and no impact to specially-designated areas, such as the National Recreation Area.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change in visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minor, temporary effects to the air quality of the environment from dust and exhaust due to boat or vehicle use for site access. Normal conditions would return upon project completion.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary noise could increase at field sites from boat and equipment use and human presence. However, these actions would be consistent with current activities typical of the field sites. There would be no permanent change in ambient noise.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work is not considered hazardous. All personnel would use best management practices to protect worker health and safety, and it would not have any general public or safety risks.

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: Northern pike is classified as a Level 1 prohibited species in the State of Washington under WAC 220-640-030. The proposed action is part of a defined management approach coordinated by the State of Washington and is designed to prevent further spread of the species.

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: Suppression and monitoring efforts would occur in waterbodies where WDFW has jurisdiction to manage fisheries in the State of Washington. If northern pike is detected in waterbodies where WDFW does not have management authority, WDFW would coordinate with the land owner/manager to determine a mutually acceptable response action.

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

Signed:

Carolyn A. Sharp
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist