

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Canyon Creek - Pivot Pipe Repair

Project No.: 2010-072-00

Project Manager: Eric Leitzinger, EWM - 4

Location: Lemhi County, Idaho

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 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 Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) to replace an irrigation pipe that was installed as part of the previously implemented Canyon Creek Confluence Project¹ funded by BPA. The center pivot connected to the pipeline has been experiencing low flow due to a leaky pipeline. Repairs to the pipeline would result in less water being drawn from Canyon Creek, near the confluence with the Lemhi River, which would result in more water staying in the river system to support critical spawning and rearing habitat for Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), Chinook salmon (*O. tshawytscha*), and resident and migratory bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*).

Proposed work would be completed by using a backhoe to dig a trench approximately 3 feet deep and 2 feet wide where the original pipe was installed. The original pipe was a combination of 12-inch-diameter and 8-inch-diameter pipe. A new 10-inch-diameter pipe would be installed alongside the original pipe. IDFG would install approximately 2,600 feet of pipe. Where the pipeline crosses the Lemhi River, the pipe would be attached to an existing metal pipe that crosses over the top of the river. IDFG would connect one end of the pipe to an existing pumphouse and the other end to the existing center pivot. Once installation is complete, the trench would be backfilled. Any trenched areas that are not part of an existing agricultural field would be seeded after construction. Construction access would be on existing farm roads.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp) and supports conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Columbia River System BiOp (2020 FWS CRS BiOp). These actions also support BPA's commitments to the State of Idaho in the Columbia River Fish Accord, as amended, 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

¹ Bonneville Power Administration. June 2020. Lemhi Valley River and Floodplain Restoration Projects Environmental Assessment (DOE/EA-2133). Bonneville Power Administration, Portland, OR. 160 pages.

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 1021.102 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.²

Jacquelyn Schei
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

² 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.

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Project Site Description

The project area is located within the Lemhi River Valley, near the confluence of Canyon Creek and the Lemhi River, on private property in Lemhi County, Idaho. The project is less than a mile north of the town of Leadore and less than 0.5 miles east of Highway 28. The project area is generally flat at an elevation approximately 5,900 feet above sea level. The area is a dry, intermontane sagebrush valley ecoregion that has drier conditions and stony soils that can affect plant life. The area is extensively used for agriculture and a portion of the project area is within an irrigated field. The remaining area consists of sagebrush grasslands and narrow riparian zones along Canyon Creek and the Lemhi River.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The proposed action is within the original area of potential effect and the actions (installing new pipe even if more than originally installed) were considered under prior consultation (BPA cultural resource numbers ID 2020 019 and ID 2020 037), no additional Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act consultation is required for these revised actions.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA would require that work be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA and in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be temporary impacts to geology and soils due to displacement and compaction of soil from the operation of a backhoe to excavate soils for the pipeline trench. Erosion and sediment control best management practices would be implemented prior to work to minimize potential for instream turbidity or excessive runoff during construction. Work areas would be contoured to match the surrounding grade following construction and those areas outside the agricultural field would be seeded with native plant species to facilitate soil recovery.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Federal or state special-status plant species or habitats in the project area. There would be temporary impacts to existing vegetation including crushing and removal by heavy equipment, excavation, and trampling from work crews. This would not have long-term impacts to plant communities and post-construction seeding of disturbed areas would help reestablish native plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no ESA-listed or state special-status wildlife species or their habitats known to occur in the project area. The USFWS Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC) tools lists the Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), and North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*), all ESA-listed Threatened, as having the potential to be in the project area. In addition, IPaC lists the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*), ESA-proposed Threatened, and Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee (*Bombus suckleyi*), ESA-proposed Endangered, as having the potential to be present in the project area. There are no critical habitats for ESA-listed or proposed species in the project area and no confirmed presence of any of the species in the project area. In addition, due to agricultural activity in and around the site and the proximity of the town of Leadore and Highway 28 to the project area, it is unlikely these species would be present in the project area. Therefore, there would be no impact to ESA-listed or proposed species from the project.

Wildlife present during project activities may be temporarily disturbed by human presence and noise, but this is expected to be minor given that the location of the project site is adjacent to an existing paved road and agricultural lands. Local wildlife would likely avoid the area during implementation and return once the project work is completed.

Disturbance and/or displacement would be temporary, localized, minor and cause no lasting impact to wildlife.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The Lemhi River contains ESA-listed bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), and steelhead (*O. mykiss*) and their designated critical habitat. Canyon Creek supports juvenile Chinook salmon and steelhead and has the potential for adult steelhead spawning. No state special-status species occupy the project area. Project activities would be focused in the floodplain and upland areas. Since the work would be completed during low flows, fish would not be in the floodplain and there would be no impacts to ESA-listed fish species. Overall, the proposed actions would improve long-term conditions for fish by allowing more water to stay in Canyon Creek instead of withdrawn for irrigation.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is a wetland along the Lemhi River in the project area classified as a forest-shrub wetland by the USFWS National Wetlands Inventory. Forest-shrub wetlands typically consist of an overstory under 20 feet tall, an understory of young trees or shrubs, and an herbaceous layer. This area is only seasonally flooded, and the ground is dry during most of the year, including when project actions would be implemented; therefore, the project would have minor impacts on the wetland. If the work is not exempt under Section 404(f)(1) of the Clean Water Act, IDFG would obtain a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers prior to the start of any work and comply with all terms and conditions outlined in the permit and approval. In the long term, it is expected that vegetation would reoccupy the area where the trench would be excavated in this area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or uses of groundwater are proposed. There would be potential for contamination of groundwater from fuel or fluid drips or spills from the heavy equipment

used, but spills and drips with the volume necessary to contaminate groundwater are unlikely. Onsite spill kits would also minimize the potential for spills and drips to be of sufficient quantity to contaminate groundwater.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The underlying land use would not change and there would be no impact to specially-designated areas as a result of this project.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Short-term changes to visual quality would occur from construction activities and presence of vehicles and equipment, but would return to pre-project conditions when the project is complete.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary generation of emissions associated with the use of well drilling equipment would occur but would return to normal conditions once the project is completed.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Noise associated with equipment operation and human presence would be generated during daylight hours for the duration of the project. This would be minor and temporary and not expected to exceed regular, ambient noise levels from the nearby agricultural operations in the area.

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. There would be no soil contamination or hazardous conditions. All personnel would use best management practices to protect worker health and safety.

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 site is located on private property and IDFG has secured permission from, and is coordinating with, the landowner to perform the work.

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

Signed:

Jacquelyn Schei
Environmental Protection Specialist