

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Highway 20 Restoration Project

Project No.: 2023-001-00

Project Manager: Virginia Preiss, EWU-4

Location: Okanogan County, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.20 Protection of cultural resources, fish and wildlife

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CTCR) to construct eight large wood structures in the channel and banks on the north side of the Methow River to enhance low and high flow habitat, promote wood aggradation in the area, and improve channel complexity. Native vegetation would be planted in all disturbed areas to promote riparian function, increase food production, and improve habitat complexity for target species.

Large wood structures would be built—from logs that are 15- to 30-feet long and 18- to 24-inches in diameter—along about a half-mile segment of the Methow River. Wood would be buried in the bank of the river and on existing gravel bars below the ordinary high-water mark. Wood would be placed on site using an excavator. Disturbed areas, including a temporary access road and a 1-acre staging area, would be planted and seeded with native species.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp). These proposed activities also fulfill commitments specified in the 2020 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Columbia River System BiOp (2020 FWS CRS BiOp). These actions also support BPA's 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 1021.102 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

Ted Gresh
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: Highway 20 Restoration Project

Project Site Description

The Highway 20 Restoration Project site is located approximately 10 miles north of the town of Twisp, WA. The surrounding area is primarily comprised of residential and agricultural land uses.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA made a determination of no adverse effect to historic properties on May 23, 2025 (WA 2023 003). BPA consulted with the Confederated Tribes of Colville Reservation, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, and Washington Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation (DAHP). BPA did not receive comments from any of the consulting parties within 30 days.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be temporary displacement and compaction impacts to soil from the operation of heavy equipment needed for this action, and an increased erosion potential during construction activities. An Erosion and Pollution Control Plan would be implemented to minimize potential for in-stream turbidity or excessive runoff during construction. A Site Reclamation and Restoration Plan would require all disturbed surfaces be restored by scraping compacted soils and seeding using native grasses.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no ESA-listed or special status plant species known to exist on the site. Areas disturbed because of the excavation and access would be seeded with a locally derived and adapted native seed mixture. Any temporary impacts to on-site vegetation would be restored to diverse, native vegetative communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no ESA-listed or special-status wildlife species, including sensitive wildlife species, documented in or adjacent to the project area and no designated critical habitat is present. Non-listed resident wildlife species would be temporarily disturbed by noise and human presence during construction; however, this disturbance would be limited and would not permanently displace wildlife. These effects would be mild, temporary, and localized to the project area. Site revegetation efforts would improve wildlife habitat in the long term, although the riparian zone and channel are likely too narrow to be a properly functioning habitat in either case.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed fish in the Methow River are Upper Columbia River spring Chinook, Upper Columbia River steelhead, and bull trout. The project was reviewed and consulted on under the HIP Biological Opinions under Section 7 of the ESA. The project sponsor would adhere to all applicable site-specific conservation measures identified in the HIP consultation and approval, including turbidity monitoring requirements and in-water work timing. There would be long-term benefits to restoring the project area to a more natural condition and restoring habitat for local fish.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands within the project area so there would be no impacts to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The construction of large wood structures would not alter groundwater levels or flow patterns.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The construction of large wood structures would not alter would current land-use patterns.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be temporary visual impacts from the presence of construction equipment along the river bank and on gravel bars. In the long term the presence of the large wood structures would be consistent with appearance with other natural features along the Methow River.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A temporary increase in emissions and dust from vehicles during construction actions on the project site would be minor and short-term during construction period but would return to normal conditions once the project is completed.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would result in a temporary increase in ambient noise. Any noise emitted from construction equipment would be short-term and temporary during daylight hours and would cease following project completion.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work is not considered hazardous, nor does it result in any health or safety risks to the public. All personnel would use best management practices to protect workers' health and safety during construction actions.

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 CTCR is the landowner. Access to the project area crosses private property and an agreement is in place to allow construction vehicle access.

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