

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: YTAHP Wenas Creek RM 8.5 Bassett Fish Screen Installation

Project No.: 2007-398-00

Project Manager: Daniel Newberry, EWU-4

Location: Yakima County, Washington

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 North Yakima Conservation District (NYCD), through the Yakima Tributary Access and Habitat Program (YTAHP), to install a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and National Marine Fisheries Service compliant fish screen on the end of an existing irrigation pump intake on private land owned by Bassett near Selah, Washington. Wenas Creek is utilized by Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed steelhead, Chinook and coho salmon, and a suite of resident fishes. ESA-listed bull trout are present in the Yakima River and may utilize the lower reaches of Wenas Creek for overwintering habitat.

NYCD would install the fish screen on the existing intake in Wenas Creek at River Mile (RM) 8.5 to prevent fish entrainment in the irrigation canal. The fish screen would be placed by hand on the pump intake and in the dry (no in-water work); there would be no disturbance to the creek bed or bank. NYCD would implement the activity in the fall of 2025.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp) and the 2020 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 USFWS CRS BiOp). These actions also support 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. 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

Brenda Aguirre
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 Evaluation

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 Wenas Creek at RM 8.5 within the Wenas Creek Watershed of the Upper Yakima River Subbasin. Wenas Creek is a tributary to the Yakima River at RM 122. The legal description of the project site is T14N, R18E, Sec 10. The surrounding area is used for agricultural crop production and grazing.

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 on August 18, 2025.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would generate small amounts of soil disturbance while accessing and leaving the work site; 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 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 habitat present. Some 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 Middle Columbia River steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and their designated critical habitat are present in the project area. ESA-listed bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) are present in the Yakima River and may utilize the lower reaches of Wenas Creek for overwintering habitat. Sponsor would utilize Best Management Practices to avoid and minimize impacts to fish during project implementation (the fish screen would be

placed by hand on the pump intake hose in the dry; no in-water work). Some disturbance to non-listed fish during project activities may occur due to removal and replacement of the pump intake hose from the creek. Any impacts would be short term, and the overall impact would be beneficial to all fish species. Project activities are not expected to impact water bodies 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; designated farmland would not be taken out of production.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project activity does not propose changes to visual quality; the pump intake screen would be visually consistent with agricultural irrigation infrastructure.

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 short-term implementation noise during daylight hours while vehicles access and leave the project site. 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 does not involve the use of hazardous materials or propose work in areas of known soil contamination.

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: Installation of the fish screen would not cause impacts to surrounding landowners. The project sponsor, NYCD, has coordinated with the underlying landowner (Bassett) 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