

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Yakima Phase II Fish Screens Operations and Maintenance with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

Project No.: 1992-009-00

Project Manager: Verl Miller, EWM-4

Location: Multiple

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 Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to conduct operation and maintenance activities at existing fish screen facilities. BPA funding would support the compliant operation of 49 fish screen and 16 fishway facilities by performing basic routine operations and maintenance (O&M) inspections, communicating with water users, and performing basic seasonal inspections and repairs. These fish screen facilities are mandated to meet National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)/National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and WDFW fish screening requirements which are based on best available science.

Three types of O&M activities would occur:

- 1) Spring start-up activities include cleaning and other routine maintenance prior to when water comes through the site for the first time.
- 2) Mid-season inspections would happen during the irrigation season. WDFW would perform weekly visits to fish-screen facilities sites where screens are inspected for cleanliness and proper function. Logbooks are updated and any necessary modifications to the site are made and recorded. The goal of each visit is to ensure fish are being adequately protected and the correct amount of water is being screened.
- 3) Annual inspections would happen once irrigation season is over, and no water is coming into sites. The screens are inspected and basic maintenance, like rubber seal replacement, is conducted. During the inspection, needs at each site are documented and the screens are prepped for the winter months.

The Phase II Fish Screens are located in three general areas: Mid-Columbia - 38 fish screen Facilities; Upper Columbia - 11 Fish Screen Facilities; and Lower Columbia - 16 Fishway Facilities.

Actions to maintain proper functioning of the fish screens would include:

- Removing accumulated debris from bypass outfalls, screens, bypass pipes, and trash racks
- Inspecting, maintaining and replacing fish screen components, including screen material, cleaning arms, seals, bypass pipes, gear boxes, u-joints, bearings, and batteries.
- Adjusting headgates, weir boards and/or bypass orifices.
- Managing vegetation, manually or with terrestrial herbicide treatments.
- Installing or replacing walkway and/or safety handrails.

In some cases, full parts replacement would be needed depending on the extent of the damage to the screen. ODFW employees would utilize existing access ways to the fish screens. Sediment and debris would typically be flushed through the bypass outfalls, however when heavy equipment is utilized for sediment and debris removal all of it would be disposed of on-site in an upland area. No excavation of stream or stream bank materials would occur, and no work would occur within the stream channel.

WDFW would also provide pre-fabricated material, or fabricate, modular gravity diversion fish screens adherent to WDFW and NOAA screening criteria for use in the Middle and Upper Columbia River regions for salmon recovery efforts. These screens would constitute WDFW's cost share contribution. Other partners may handle actual screen facility construction, though WDFW staff may assist and oversee with fish screen installation.

The proposed action would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the operation and maintenance of the Columbia River System. This action also supports 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

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 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

These projects would occur within irrigation ditches on public and private lands within the Lower Columbia. (Cowlitz, Clark, Skamania Counties), Mid-Columbia (Yakima, Kittitas, Columbia, and Walla Walla Counties), and Upper Columbia sub-basins (Chelan, and Okanogan Counties).

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no ground disturbance outside of the irrigation canal. A BPA Archaeologist determined that the proposed activities do not have the potential to cause effects to historic or cultural resources.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Continued maintenance on existing structures. No new ground disturbance.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Continued maintenance of existing structures using existing access points. Overgrown Continued maintenance of existing structures using existing access points. No known populations of Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed plants in any of the project areas.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary displacement of wildlife due to noise and human presence from maintenance activities could occur. No long-term effect on wildlife or their habitat.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Actions would have no effect or be classified as low risk to species according to the current biological opinions issued by the FWS and NMFS on the effects of Bonneville's Habitat Improvement Program (HIP). ESA-listed fish species present in the project areas include Middle Columbia Chinook, Middle Columbia steelhead, cutthroat trout, bull trout; and state sensitive species in the project areas include interior redband trout, lamprey, and mountain whitefish. A project notification form (PNF) for those activities falling under the HIP consultation would be submitted annually. In the long term, fish species would benefit from the project because the screens would be properly maintained to help prevent fish entrainment.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands present; therefore, no impacts to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impact to groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change to land use proposed.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary changes to visual quality could occur in the immediate project areas due to fish screen maintenance and equipment occurring in the project area. Any minor change would be consistent with the existing screen and diversion infrastructure.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary generation of emissions associated with increased vehicular traffic would occur during project activities.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary intermittent noise would be generated during implementation

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No or No with Condition

Explanation: No known hazardous materials in the project areas.

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: Operation and maintenance of existing irrigation fish screen structures would not cause impacts to surrounding landowners. WDFW would work with land owners to maintain irrigation fish screens on private land.

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