

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Pole Flat Camp Yurt

**Project No.:** 2008-904-00

**Project Manager:** Verl Miller, EWM-4

**Location:** Custer County, Idaho

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B1.15 Support buildings

**Description of the Proposed Action:** The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Shoshone Bannock Tribes (SBT) Fish & Wildlife Department to install a yurt with a deck at the Pole Flat Campground along the Yankee Fork, on US Forest Service (USFS) Salmon-Challis National Forest managed land in Custer County, Idaho. The yurt would be constructed at a previously-cleared location and materials would be staged on site. Installation does not require digging, clearing, or other ground disturbance, and the yurt and deck would be constructed on concrete casters.

The Project would enhance a previously established off-site remote field workstation at the Pole Flat Campground with a 32-foot by 32-foot deck to facilitate installation of a 20-foot-wide yurt. This enhancement would serve as a satellite facility to provide sleeping accommodations and a work/office environment while conducting fieldwork. The deck framework would be freestanding on precast concrete casters, no excavation or any permanent footings would be required or installed. Upon completion of the deck, the 20-foot-wide yurt would be installed upon the deck. The completed yurt would provide housing for SBT field crews during the operation and maintenance of the Pole Flat weir as data is collected on anadromous fishes, including ESA-listed species, and bull trout. This installation would mitigate safety concerns associated with field crews driving approximately 3.5 hours between the Fort Hall Reservation during field work. The Project is expected to be completed in 2026.

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 BiOp (2020 FWS CRS BiOp). These actions also support BPA's commitments to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes 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 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.<sup>1</sup>

Israel Duran  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

**Proposed Action:** Pole Flat Camp Yurt

## **Project Site Description**

Installation would occur in the Yankee Fork of the Salmon River watershed about 16 miles northeast of Stanley, in Custer County, Idaho on US Forest Service-managed property within the Salmon-Challis National Forest at the SBT's existing Pole Flat Fish Monitoring Station and in accordance with a USFS Special Use Permit (CHL123). The Yankee Fork supports a diverse array of native fishes; however, past and current land management activities (i.e. dredge mining, and intense timber harvesting) have impacted areas critical to their survival. The Yankee Fork Gold Dredge is nearby and there are camping, mining, trails, other recreational activities and interests within a several mile radius. Access and staging is readily available and the site is directly adjacent to Pole Flat Campground and Yankee Fork Road, which separates the Project site from the Yankee Fork.

## **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA made a determination of no potential to cause effect on August 28, 2025 (BPA CR Project No.: ID 2025 023).

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The Project does not have associated subsurface ground disturbance and installation of the yurt and deck would occur in a previously disturbed leveled and graveled area that has an adjacent yurt and recreational vehicles. The foundation consists of concrete casters placed directly on the ground. All work would be done with hand tools to minimize impacts. There is no other planned mixing of soil layers or ground disturbance proposed.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*) is Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed as threatened and could potentially be present within the Project area (US Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation [IPaC], 2025.) However, the area has been highly impacted due to previous mining efforts and suitable habitat is not present. No other Federal or State special-status plant species are within the project sites. The installation area is graveled and no vegetation would be impacted.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) and North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*) are ESA-listed and their critical habitats are present within Custer County (IPaC, 2025) but are not known to exist within the Project area. The monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) and Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee (*Bombus suckleyi*) are proposed for ESA listing and may be in the Project area, but there is no designated critical habitat for either species. The Project area has been highly impacted due to previous mining efforts and current use and does not contain suitable habitat for wildlife species. Wildlife that are present may be temporarily displaced by construction noise during implementation or maintenance but would return to the project area once after construction. No other Federal or State special-status species or habitat are known to exist on the project site; therefore, there would be no impact from the installation of the yurt and its associated parts.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The Project site is adjacent to the Yankee Fork of the Salmon River but separated by the Yankee Fork Road. Project does not include any work within the Yankee Fork of the Salmon River or any other water body. Therefore, the Project does not have the potential to impact water bodies, floodplains, or fish. The yurt would provide space for housing and data processing at the site for SBT crews who are conducting field work and collecting data on fish, including ESA-listed species, presence at the Pole Flat Weir,

## **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Wetlands are not present; thus, the action does not have the potential to impact wetlands.

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing activities are proposed and the action would not result in an increase in groundwater use. The work would not change the hydrological regime and, therefore, would not affect groundwater recharge.

## **8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Access to the site is on Yankee Fork Road and existing road networks and all activities are compatible with local land use. Land use would not change. The Project is not located in a specially-designated area or Wild and Scenic River.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary changes would occur during construction. Short-term changes to the landscape would occur during construction, such as work zone conditions, vehicles, and equipment. The yurt would not be a permanent installation. Therefore, the proposed action would not have a permanent impact on visual quality.

## **10. Air Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A temporary increase in emissions and dust from vehicles accessing the project site would be very minor and short-term during construction. A negligible amount of temporary

dust and vehicle emissions could be generated during project activities. Emissions and dust levels would return to normal conditions immediately 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 general public. Personnel are trained in proper equipment management techniques, and all applicable safety regulations would be followed. There would be no soil contamination or hazardous conditions and no CERCLA sites within the project area.

### 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 actions are proposed by BPA to be implemented by SBT staff within the Salmon-Challis National Forest, and work is done in coordination with land managers and in accordance with the Special Use Permit (CHL123) provided by the Forest Service.

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

Signed:

Israel Duran  
Environmental Protection Specialist