

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Yakama Nation's Geotesting for Taneum Creek River Mile 5 Restoration Project

Project No.: 1997-051-00

Project Manager: Daniel Newberry, EWU-4

Location: Kittitas County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B3.1 Site characterization and environmental monitoring

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Yakama Nation, Yakima Klickitat Fisheries Project (YKFP), to implement pre-project studies for the Taneum Creek River Mile 5 Restoration Project. These projects would take place on Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife managed state land in Kittitas County of Washington State.

The YKFP proposes implementing preliminary work for the Taneum Creek River Mile 5 Restoration Project that would consist of excavating 15 geotechnical test pits to characterize subsurface sediment texture and layers. YKFP would mechanically excavate the test pits utilizing a backhoe. The test pits would measure depths of approximately 15 to 20 feet below site grade, 16 to 24 inches wide, and 4 to 8 feet long. Once subsurface measurements and samples are captured, the test pits would be backfilled with excavated materials.

If soil conditions in test pits indicate soft or weak soil not suitable to support certain future project components, YKFP would complete supplemental borings using a geotechnical drill rig. Borings would go to depths of about 20 to 50 feet below grade and would collect between 2.5 to 5 feet of samples.

These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with NMFS on the O&M of the Columbia River System. 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

Catherine Clark
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Evaluation

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 evaluation 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 geotechnical test pits would be located between river miles 4.6 to 5.4 along the Taneum Creek on Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife managed property which is primarily dominated by cottonwood (*Populus trichocarpa*), alder (*Alnus spp.*), and bigleaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*) trees with some ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*) and Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) in the uplands. The primary goal of this property is protecting and enhancing fish and wildlife habitat.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) on the proposed project on February 24, 2023. Consulting parties included the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservations, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). BPA reviewed a cultural resource inventory report for the project, which documented eight archaeological sites. On January 27, 2025, BPA determined that these sites were not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and that the proposed project would result in no historic properties affected. DAHP concurred with this determination on January 27, 2025. WDFW concurred with this determination on June 9, 2025. No other responses were received from consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Soil would be displaced during geotechnical test pit excavation. The depth of soil disturbance for test pits would not exceed 20 feet. All excavation would be backfilled following materials testing. Therefore, the proposed actions would have minimal impact to soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed or state special status plant species in the project areas. Plants in the immediate vicinity of each project area would be subject to short term impacts as a result of trampling by equipment used to reach the project sites. Vegetation within the project sites would be excavated, this would not be expected to have long term impact to plant communities. To reduce impacts to plant species, large mats of existing topsoil would be set aside during excavation, these mats would then be placed on top of the backfilled material following completion of implementation. Those efforts are expected to result in revegetation of the disturbed areas.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary disturbance of normal wildlife behavior could occur from elevated noise and human presence at the project site. However, the proposed actions would be temporary (no more than a few hours at each site) and would be largely consistent with human activity typical of the sites. Wildlife species that could be present in the area would likely be accustomed to this level of activity. The proposed actions would not result in adverse modification to suitable protected species habitat. Therefore, the proposed actions would have no effect on ESA-listed or state special-status wildlife species or habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The Taneum Creek contains ESA-listed steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), and Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), and their critical habitat. The creek also contains state special-status cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii clade*) and lamprey (*Entosphenus tridentatus*). All test pits would be implemented above the ordinary high water mark and there would be no impact to ESA-listed or state special-status fish species. In the long term, the testing would support the development of a restoration project that would benefit these species.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Wetlands are not present within the Taneum Creek project area; therefore, the proposed action would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Geotechnical test pits would not withdraw or divert water from the groundwater system. Spill prevention measures would be present to prevent the potential for groundwater contamination.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is currently being utilized for habitat protection with a right-of-way access to private property. Implementation of the geotechnical test pits may cause a day-long disruption to right-of-way access, but would not change the land use of the project area in the long term. Access disruptions would be coordinated with the private property owner.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Visual quality would have minor changes associated with excavation but would return to pre-project conditions upon revegetation and would not change in the long term as a result of the proposed actions.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary generation of emissions associated with the use of excavation equipment would occur.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary noise increases associated with vehicles and excavation equipment would occur.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All personnel would use best management practices to protect workers' 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: Yakama Nation will work with WDFW for access to all site locations.

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

Signed:

Catherine Clark
Environmental Protection Specialist