

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Ringold Springs Hatchery Electrical Upgrades Project

Project Manager: Dorie Welch, E-4

Location: Franklin County, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to provide funding to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to implement the Ringold Springs Hatchery Electrical Upgrades Project located on lands managed by WDFW in Franklin County, Washington.

The proposed project would involve upgrading power service to an existing river pump at the Ringold Springs Hatchery. The hatchery has an existing 10 cubic feet per second water right on the Columbia River, but the river intake screen (installed 10 to 15 years ago) is too small to utilize the full water right. Additionally, the existing river pump, installed in the early 1990s, does not have adequate power for the required pump size, and the pump's control panel can be damaged during high water events because it is too close to the ground.

To address these issues, WDFW would upgrade power service to the river pump, remove and replace outdated components, and elevate the pump controls on an existing pole. Auguring for power service utility poles may be necessary in two locations – where a pole would be added immediately adjacent to the roadway within existing gravel/fill and where a pole would be replaced in kind should the existing pole not be adequate for the power service upgrade. WDFW would also purchase and install (in-kind) a screen and pump adequate to utilize the water right.

These actions would occur at an existing facility to support current levels of fish production and would not extend the original intended life of any of the facilities. There would be no increase in the water supply used or in the number of fish produced than previously authorized. Funding for these actions would support projects that contribute to the restoration of salmon and other native fish populations.

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

Carolyn A. Sharp
Supervisory 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.

Proposed Action: Ringold Springs Hatchery Electrical Upgrades Project

Project Site Description

Ringold Springs Hatchery is an existing hatchery facility operated by WDFW on the Hanford Reach of the Columbia River. The facility consists of a gravity-fed spring water supply, a 9-acre earthen pond, 5-acre rearing pond, 14 vinyl raceways and an adult trap and holding pond. Each year WDFW raises 3.7 million fall chinook, 250,000 yearling coho salmon, and 180,000 yearling steelhead in addition to other game fish for recreational fishing. The US Army Corps of Engineers funds operation and maintenance of the facility as part of the John Day Mitigation program. The facility has a boat ramp that is open to the public year-round. Surrounding land use is predominantly irrigated agriculture, with the undeveloped arid shrub-steppe landscape of the Hanford Site located on the other (west) side of the Columbia River.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA sent a combined initiation and determination consultation on November 3, 2025 to the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Nez Perce Tribe, Wanapum Tribe, and the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) (BPA CR Project No. WA 2026 001, SHPO No. 2025-10-06852). Based on background research of numerous cultural resource surveys conducted within one mile of the APE, there are no historic properties within the APE that would be affected by the proposed infrastructure replacement. BPA determined the proposed undertaking has a low probability of impacting archaeological resources because the level of disturbance is anticipated to be discrete and within the footprint of previous disturbance. A response was received from DAHP on the same date concurring with the determination. The Nez Perce Tribe responded November 5, 2025, stating they had no comments. No other responses were received.

Notes:

- An inadvertent discovery protocol will be present on-site during implementation.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The level of disturbance is anticipated to be minimal and within the footprint of previous disturbance. There would be a small effect to geology or soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Activities would occur within existing developed areas that are vegetated with grasses and low growing vegetation that allow routine operational access. While there may be some short-term effects from trampling and auguring of two holes for poles, there would be no long term effects to vegetation. No ESA-listed or state-sensitive plant species are present within the project sites.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Work would occur in an existing, developed facility. There would be no effect to wildlife as the proposed activity would not introduce noticeable human activity and noise compared to existing human activity and noise associated with existing facility operations.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No in-river work would occur associated with these maintenance actions. Ground disturbance would be minimal and no erosion or runoff is anticipated from construction activities as temporary erosion and sediment control measures would be implemented. Water withdrawals associated with the new pump would be consistent with the facility's water right. There would be no impact on water bodies, floodplains, and fish. The project would benefit fish and other aquatic organisms in the long term as the new fish screen would be designed to minimize impingement and entrainment.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No fill or dredge material would be placed in or removed from surface water or wetlands. There would be no effect to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or groundwater use are proposed by these actions. As a result, there would be no impacts to groundwater and aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Existing land uses (aquaculture) would remain the same. There would be no impact to specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in the visual character of the facilities would occur and the work would involve predominantly replacement of parts or equipment in-kind.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There may be minor and temporary amounts of exhaust produced by construction equipment. The emissions would be of short duration and consistent in amount and

duration with routine vehicle use currently at the facility. There would be no long-term effects to air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Noise is anticipated during construction activities. The noise would be of short duration and consistent in volume or duration with operational activities at the facility. This noise would be temporary and cause no long-term impacts.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All personnel would use best management practices to protect worker health and safety. Equipment may be removed or replaced that contains hazardous materials; these materials would be disposed of off-site according to all local, state, and federal regulations. No impacts to human health and safety are expected as a result of project activities.

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 action would be implemented by WDFW on land owned by WDFW. No landowner coordination is necessary.

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

Signed:

Carolyn A. Sharp
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist