

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Prosser Hatchery Staging Area

Project No.: 2008-527-00

Project Manager: Andrew Traylor, EWU-4

Location: Benton 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 fund the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission to develop two temporary staging areas near the Prosser Fish Hatchery. The areas would be used for delivery and/or storage of large materials and equipment to support infrastructure improvements at the hatchery.

One area southwest of the hatchery is currently undeveloped open space that supports non-native and native scrub vegetation. Preparation of this 1-acre staging area would involve removal or compaction of low growing vegetation, light grading and potentially gravelling. This staging area would be used throughout the duration of Prosser Hatchery construction activities and would be decompacted and hydroseeded with a native seed mix after construction is complete.

A second 1.5-acre area north of the hatchery that is already graveled and used as access to the hatchery and Bureau of Reclamation facilities would also be used for staging. This area has been previously graded and graveled and is immediately adjacent to the existing access road. It is located behind a fenced gate and no improvements are anticipated.

On July 6, 2023,, BPA completed a Categorical Exclusion Memo (CX) documenting BPA's decision to fund Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission to upgrade acclimation infrastructure for improved rearing conditions for yearling and sub-yearling fall Chinook at the Prosser Fish Hatchery on the Chandler Canal of the Yakima River. Mobilization and staging associated with construction began in December 2025. During pre-construction planning, the need for additional staging area was identified to provide adequate space for the volume of construction materials anticipated and allow unobstructed access for ongoing operations and maintenance as the hatchery will remain fully operational during construction.

Funding the proposed activities support ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the FCRPS 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.

Carolyn A. Sharp
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Evaluation

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: Prosser Hatchery Staging Area Expansion

Project Site Description

The hatchery facility is located on federally owned lands managed by the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) in Prosser, Washington and the hatchery is operated under license by the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation. The existing site is already developed and operated as a fish hatchery. The surrounding landscape is characterized by brush and grassland and is bounded by the Yakima River to the south and west, Chandler Canal to the north, and agricultural land to the east. An existing compacted gravel roadway encircles the hatchery facilities.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA submitted an expanded Area of Potential Effect (APE) and a determination of No Adverse Effect to Historic Properties under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (BPA Cultural Resources Project Number ID WA 2022 070) on December 17, 2025. Consulting parties included the Washington Department of Historic Preservation (DAHP), USBR, the Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and Nez Perce Tribe. BPA received email concurrence from the DAHP on December 17, 2025. BPA also received a response from the Yakama Nation on December 29 with a follow up conversation on January 9, 2026 to coordinate an update to the documentation of a known Traditional Cultural Place (TCP) in the vicinity. No additional concerns about the proposed activity were identified.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground preparation activities would only be needed for the additional staging area south of the hatchery and it would be consistent with and similar to the ground preparation that would be required for construction of the new circular rearing tanks. Soils have been previously disturbed by past development and standard construction best management practices (BMPs) would minimize erosion, sedimentation, and fugitive dust. There would be no discernable effect to geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no ESA-listed or state-sensitive plant species present at the project site. As a result, there would be no effect on listed plant species. Existing vegetation is comprised of low growing grasses and non-native species. Vegetation may be removed or crushed, but BMPs would be employed during construction to control the spread of weeds; the area would be decompacted and reseeded following construction to ensure vegetation reestablishes. There would be a minimal short-term effect and vegetation is expected to return in the long term.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Federal or state special-status wildlife species known to occur within the project area. 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 urban areas and agricultural development.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All activities would occur on land within previously developed areas. No in-river/channel work would occur and BMPs would be used to prevent sediment from running off site. There would be no impact on water bodies, floodplains and fish. No new water supplies or water rights would be needed for this upgrade.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands present within the site. There would be no impact to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Impacts to aquifers and groundwater would not occur as a result of the additional staging areas. Ground disturbance would be limited to removal of vegetation and possibly light grading of the top few inches of soil on the staging area to the south of the hatchery. Spill prevention measures would be present on site.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Existing land uses (aquaculture) would remain the same and the additional staging area would allow the hatchery to remain fully operational during construction. There would be no impact to specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The visual quality of the staging area would be consistent with the visual effects of construction and existing development in the short term. There would be no long-term impacts to visual quality and the area would be returned to existing conditions.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction BMPs would be used to minimize dust generated within the staging area during construction. There would be no long-term effects to air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Noise is anticipated during construction activities, consistent in duration and volume with ongoing hatchery operations and effects would be temporary. The addition of a staging area would have no additional effect to noise.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: By allowing additional area for staging materials, construction activities and concurrent hatchery operations would be better separated, creating improved human health and safety conditions during construction.

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 operates the hatchery under a Memorandum of Agreement with the USBR and has coordinated use of the staging areas consistent with the terms of the agreement.

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