

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** YTAHP Cooke Creek RM 4.25 Phase I Pump and Fish Screen Installation

**Project No.:** 2007-398-00

**Project Manager:** Daniel Newberry, EWU-4

**Location:** Kittitas County, Washington

**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 the Kittitas County Conservation District (KCCD) through the Yakima Tributary Access and Habitat Program (YTAHP) to replace gravity irrigation withdrawal with a pump withdrawal and install a Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) compliant fish screen on the pump hose. Cooke Creek is utilized by Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed Middle Columbia River steelhead, Chinook and coho salmon. The objective of the replacement and screening is to prevent entrainment of fish into the irrigation delivery system.

A channel-spanning concrete dam with riser boards is used to raise the water surface elevation to feed a right and left bank gravity diversion. The unscreened diverted water is used to irrigate the surrounding agricultural fields via gravity with gated pipe. The landowner/irrigator is concurrently completing an on-farm irrigation efficiency project funded by Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to convert rill irrigation (furrow irrigation) to pressurized sprinklers. Phase I activities under BPA funding would replace the existing unscreened gravity diversion on the right bank with a pump and install an NMFS- and WDFW-compliant fish screen on the pump hose in 2026 to allow for spring irrigation. Phase II activities with BPA funding would remove the check dam, replace the left-bank gravity diversion with a pump, and install a compliant fish screen in the fall of 2027. Phase II actions would be analyzed under a separate NEPA document, pending cost-share funding availability and further project design.

Activities for Phase I would involve building with an excavator an 8- by 8-foot concrete pumping pad that would be 6 inches thick. The new pumping pad would be located approximately 10 feet from the right bank. A pump and boom with an intake hose would be mounted on the concrete pad. The boom would be used to move the hose and screen into and out of the creek. The screen would be placed on the hose by hand and would be removed from the creek outside of irrigation season. Two power poles, each at least 30 feet from the bank, would be installed to supply power to the new 50 horsepower pump. Either an 8-inch floating screen or a 10-inch submerged screen would be used at the diversion. The two different pump screens would be used at different times of the irrigation season depending upon flows and debris load in Cooke Creek.

Invasive crack willows would be removed from the footprint of the power poles and the distribution lines, concrete pumping pad, and the range of the boom. This would include removal of up to 4 mature crack willow trees within an area of about 100 feet long by 25 feet wide. Removed crack willow material would be disposed of off-site to avoid spreading this invasive species. Post-Phase I, coir mats and a grass seed mix would be used to stabilize any disturbed ground. Woody vegetation would be planted the year following construction.

Construction access and staging areas would use existing farm roads and disturbed lands. A mini excavator would be used to move some topsoil for the concrete pad. Pacific Power would bring in a specialized truck with an auger to drill holes for the new power poles. All displaced soil would be spread out and leveled on site using the mini excavator. All other work would be done using hand tools.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp). These actions also support 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 the current *DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Implementing Procedures*, 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.

Brenda Aguirre  
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.

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## **Project Site Description**

The project site is located on Cooke Creek at River Mile (RM) 4.25 within the Wilson/Cherry Creek Watershed of the Upper Yakima River Subbasin. Cooke Creek is a tributary to Cherry Creek, which is a tributary to Wilson Creek and enters the Yakima River at RM 147. The legal description of the project site is T17N, R19E, Sec 4. The surrounding area is used for agricultural crop production.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: NRCS was the lead-federal agency for conducting National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 consultation. NRCS consulted with the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (Colville), Snoqualmie Indian Tribe (Snoqualmie), and Confederated Tribes of the Yakama Nation (YN). DAHP, Colville, and Snoqualmie concurred with NRCS's determination of No Historic Properties Affected for this undertaking. No response was received from the YN within the 30-day review period ending December 31, 2025.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be temporary impacts to soil due to displacement and compaction of soil from the operation of a mini excavator to move topsoil for the concrete pad and Pacific Power to drill a hole via a specialized truck for the new power poles, and removal of crack willows. These actions would occur in an existing agricultural field and riparian area that has been previously plowed, tilled, and traveled on by heavy farm equipment so impacts would be minor. Construction and access would disturb less than 0.1 acre. Impacts would be minimized by the application of best management practices to control erosion.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status plant species are present. Some disturbance to non-listed or sensitive vegetation may occur during project activities due to human trampling, displacement of soil, removal of 4 non-native crack willow trees, and equipment accessing the work sites. Any impact would be short term. Disturbed areas would be replanted with native vegetation and adaptively managed for 3 years to ensure successful regeneration of a minimum of 80 percent.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status species or designated habitat present. Some disturbance to non-listed wildlife during project activities may occur due to human presence. Any impact would be short term and consistent with existing site conditions associated with the operation of agricultural equipment.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed Middle Columbia River steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and their designated critical habitat are present in the project area. The fish screen would be placed by hand on the pump intake hose in the dry; no in-water work. Some disturbance during project activities may occur due to removal and replacement of the pump intake hose from the creek. Any impact would be short term, and the overall impact would be beneficial to all fish species by preventing fish entrainment in the irrigation canal. Project activities are not expected to impact water bodies or floodplains.

## **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: None in the project area.

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project activity does not propose new wells or use of groundwater.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project activity does not propose changes to land use; designated farmland would not be taken out of production and irrigation withdrawal quantities would remain the same.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project activity does not propose substantial changes to visual quality; the pump, pump intake screens, pumping pad and boom, and power poles would be visually consistent with agricultural irrigation infrastructure.

## **10. Air Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would generate small amounts of dust and vehicle emissions while accessing and leaving the work site.

## **11. Noise**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be short-term implementation noise during daylight hours while vehicles access and leave the project site and intermittent pump operation noise during irrigation season. These noises would not be noticeably different from the surrounding agricultural production noises.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project does not involve the use of hazardous materials or propose work in areas of known soil contamination.

### 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: Installation of the pumping pad; boom, pump, hose, and screens; and power poles would not cause impacts to surrounding landowners. KCCD has coordinated with the underlying landowner/irrigator and has permission to conduct project activities.

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

Signed:

Brenda Aguirre  
Environmental Protection Specialist