

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Red River Meadows Fencing

Project No.: 2002-072-00

Project Manager: Virginia Preiss, EWM-4

Location: Idaho County, Idaho

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 Nez Perce Tribe (the Tribe) to install new fencing along the boundary of the Tribe's Red River Meadows mitigation property in central Idaho. Funding for the project would support the conservation of Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System while also supporting efforts to mitigate for the effects of the Federal Columbia River 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.*).

Trespass by cattle, vehicles, and members of the public on the Red River Meadows conservation property has been an ongoing issue and is negatively impacting habitat restoration projects that the Tribe is implementing on the property. To dissuade further trespass, the Tribe proposes to construct a new, roughly 3,800-foot-long fence along the eastern boundary of the property. The fence would run along the shoulder of Red River Road, which runs parallel to the property boundary. The fence would be constructed of wood in a buck-and-pole-style similar to other fencing already present on the property. Buck-and-pole-style fences sit on top of the ground and would not require excavation to construct. The fence would be erected in the summer of 2026.

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.

Thomas DeLorenzo
Environmental Policy Analyst

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 Red River Meadows conservation property is a privately-owned floodplain valley on which the Tribe holds a conservation easement. The valley was heavily impacted by agricultural use in the 19th and 20th centuries. The valley floor was flattened and the channel of Red River straightened to improve the conditions for farming. The property sits at about 4,000 feet of elevation and is surrounded by hills topping around 5,200 feet. Since acquiring an easement, the Tribe has implemented several habitat improvement efforts on the property, including re-meandering the stream channel and regular vegetation replanting projects, in an effort to restore the valley to its natural conditions.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A BPA archaeologist reviewed the proposed actions for potential effects on historic and cultural resources (BPA CR No. ID 2026 033). The archaeologist determined that because the project does not have associated subsurface ground disturbance, the proposed actions have no potential to affect historic and cultural resources.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Wooden buck-and-pole-style fencing sits atop the ground and would not require excavation to construct. Construction would be during the summer when the region is typically very dry, further reducing potential impacts on local geology and soil. Effects would be limited to light disturbance of the ground from staff and equipment while constructing the fence.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed plant species are known to be present at the Red River Meadows conservation property (USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC)). No separately listed Idaho special-status species are known to be present at the property (Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation).

Effects on non-listed plant species would be mild. The area in which the fence would be constructed runs alongside an existing roadway that does not have extensive vegetation that would be impacted by construction of the fence. Small areas of grass and forbs may be crushed by fence poles, but there would be no large-scale changes to local vegetation. The long-term effects of constructing the fence would be to deter trespass by cattle, vehicles, and the public, improving conditions for vegetation on the conservation property.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) and North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*) can potentially be found in Idaho County, Idaho (USFWS IPaC). Hunting and denning habitat for both species is typically higher elevation subalpine forests and tundra. It is highly unlikely that they would be present at the relatively low elevation of the project site, especially during the warm summer months when the fence would be constructed. There would therefore be no effect on ESA-listed wildlife species.

No separately listed Idaho special-status wildlife species are known to be present at the Red River Meadows conservation property (Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation).

Effects on non-listed wildlife would be mild. Wildlife would be temporarily disturbed by human presence and noise while the fence is being constructed. The fence would sit adjacent to an existing roadway and disturbances would be largely consistent with existing conditions caused by traffic and human presence. These effects would be mild and cause no long-term changes in local conditions for wildlife.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), steelhead (*O. mykiss*), and bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) are present in Red River (StreamNet, USFWS IPaC). No construction would occur in or near the river. At its closest point, the path of the fence is more than a thousand feet from the river channel. There would therefore be no negative effects on ESA-listed fish species. In the long term, there would be beneficial effects associated with removing cattle from the riparian and river channel. The Tribe has planted vegetation along the Red River channel to improve conditions for fish that has been grazed by trespassing cattle. More effectively prohibiting this trespass would improve the ability of this riparian vegetation to grow and provide improved habitat for ESA-listed fish species in the Red River.

No separately listed Idaho special-status fish species are known to be present at the Red River Meadows conservation property (Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation). Effects on non-listed fish would be functionally identical.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no mapped wetlands in or near the proposed path of the fence (USFWS National Wetlands Inventory). Constructing the fence would therefore have no effect on wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or groundwater use are proposed. Buck-and-pole-style fencing sits atop the ground and would not require any excavation which would affect groundwater. The increase in local impermeable surfaces from the new fence would be negligible.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No changes in ownership of the Red River Meadows conservation property are proposed. Construction of the fence would reduce the ability of cattle, vehicles, and

members of the public to access the conservation property. While this would represent a change from current conditions, these uses are trespassory and not authorized. Constructing the fence would ensure that the property is being used for its intended purposes and improve conditions for local fish, wildlife, and vegetation for which the property is intended to be conserved.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Wooden buck-and-pole-style fencing has been erected at other locations on the Red River Meadows conservation property. The new fence would share a consistent visual character with this existing fencing. Beyond the new fencing segments, there would be no changes to the aesthetic quality of the conservation property.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Equipment used for transporting supplies and materials, such as trucks, would generate exhaust. The effects of this exhaust on local air quality would be mild and temporary. Following construction, the new fence would not affect air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Equipment used for transporting supplies and materials, such as trucks, would generate noise. Construction would also generate noise, such as from hammering together fence posts. These effects would be mild and temporary. Following construction, the new fence would not affect local noise levels.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All personnel would use best practices to ensure human health and safety to the greatest extent possible. All machinery and equipment would be operated only by trained and licensed (when applicable) personnel.

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 Tribe holds a conservation easement on the Red River Meadows conservation property. The Tribe would coordinate with local landowners as necessary. No other outside coordination is required.

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

Signed:

Thomas DeLorenzo
Environmental Policy Analyst