

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery Chilled Water System Upgrade

Project No.: 2025-003-00

Project Manager: Brian McIlraith, EWU - 4

Location: Clearwater County, ID

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine maintenance, B1.15 Support buildings.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund upgrades to the chilled water system and supporting infrastructure at the Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery (NPTH). The proposed upgrades would improve efficiency, reliability, enhance production, and benefit all fish reared or treated at the hatchery. These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with National Marine Fisheries Service on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System (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.).

The proposed project would include the following actions:

- A new utility building to house the chilled water system would be constructed just south of the main hatchery building. A 160-foot by 45-foot building would be constructed using slab-on-grade concrete foundation, conventional wood framing, and metal panel roof and siding. Construction would include site leveling with an excavator; trenching and plumbing waterlines; and installation of electric systems, an HVAC system, UV disinfection system, pumps, filtration systems, monitoring systems, and chillers.
- A precooling sump system would be constructed on the east side of the new chilled water building. An area would be excavated to construct a 12-foot-long, 12-foot-wide, and 15-foot-deep pour-in-place concrete vault. The precooling sump pump system would be installed and plumbed to the existing hatchery waterlines.
- A waterline access manhole would be constructed south of the precooling sump pump vault. An area would be excavated to install a 5-foot-long, 5-foot-wide, and 10-foot-deep precasted concrete manhole structure. The manhole would be plumbed to existing hatchery waterlines.
- Concrete would be poured in multiple locations for sidewalks, and for foundation pads for mechanical equipment.
- A new backup generator would be installed and wired in to the hatchery infrastructure.

- Demolition and removal of obsolete equipment and infrastructure would include but is not limited to the existing chilled water system, storage tanks, booster pumps, generator, filter banks, ultraviolet disinfection systems, piping, wiring, and concrete pads. Equipment would be removed from in and around existing buildings at the NPTH facilities and any damage to structures or landscaping would be repaired.
- Areas up to approximately 6 feet around existing buildings at the hatchery facility may be trenched up to 4 feet deep to connect existing waterlines.
- Approximately 1,200 feet of new underground utility lines would be routed and tied into the hatchery infrastructure. An excavator would be used to trench lines up to 3 feet wide and 4 feet deep. Ground cover would be restored upon completion.

Actions would occur on previously-disturbed ground, and no work is planned within 500 feet of a waterway. The site would be accessed by existing roads; existing parking areas at the hatchery would be used for staging and stockpiling equipment and materials. The equipment used would include but is not limited to pick-up trucks, dump trucks, backhoes, excavators, power tools, and hand tools. There would be no increase in water use or in the number of steelhead, Chinook, or coho reared or treated at the hatchery than has been previously authorized.

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.

Lindsey Mills
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Sarah T. Biegel
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 Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery (NPTH) is located on the Nez Perce Reservation in the city of Juliaetta in Clearwater County, Idaho. The proposed project area is approximately 16 acres with an estimated disturbance area of approximately 4 acres. The hatchery is located along the Clearwater River in the Clearwater River Basin at an elevation of approximately 900 feet. The hatchery grounds are developed for hatchery operations and have little remaining natural habitat.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation for the proposed project on July 28, 2025, (ID 2025 039) and determined that the project would have *no adverse effect* to historic properties (10NP135 and the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail). BPA received a response from the Nez Perce Tribe (NPT) on July 29, 2025, concurring with the APE and the determination of effect. NPT Tribal Historic Preservation Office recommended monitoring during initial ground-disturbing activities. After BPA's determination letter was sent, the NPTH proposed additional work near the utility building on the south side of Cherryland Road. In an updated determination letter sent April 3, 2026, BPA recommended that additional field inventory was not necessary due to the history of extensive ground disturbance within the project area, the negative results from monitoring during the NPTH Kelt Reconditioning Facility construction, and the discrete nature of the planned geotechnical testing and utility/piping locations. Provided the requested monitor is present during ground-disturbing activities and a post-review discovery plan is in place prior to construction, BPA's determination of no adverse effect to historic properties remains the same. The consultation period for the updated determination letter ended May 3, 2026, and no responses were received.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The upgrades at the NPTH would disturb soils on the project site. Best Management Practices (BMP) would be used to minimize erosion, fine sediment, run-off, and dust during construction. All ground disturbances would be monitored throughout construction. Disturbed areas would be restored and stabilized upon completion of the project.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed or special-status plant species are known to exist in the project area. Therefore, no ESA-listed or special-status plants species would be impacted.

Vegetation would be disturbed by the NPTH upgrades. Larger scale existing vegetation such as trees or shrubs would be avoided, transplanted, or replaced if necessary. Ground cover vegetation impacted by the NPTH upgrades would be restored by re-seeding upon completion of the project. Overall, impact to existing vegetation would be minor.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: According to the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information and Planning Conservation (IPaC) tool, presence of the North American wolverine (ESA-listed threatened), may be possible in the region. However, wolverines typically avoid areas with high human activity and prefer undisturbed remote areas in high elevations (7,000-12,000 ft) with persistent snowpack. Due to the relatively low elevation (900 ft), lack of sufficient habitat, and heightened human presence, wolverines are not expected to be present in the project area. Therefore, this project would have no effect on the North American wolverine.

Non-listed wildlife around the NPTH may be disturbed by the increased activity and noise during construction. The disturbances would be temporary and return to baseline operating conditions upon completion.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No work would occur in or near Clearwater River during the proposed construction at the NPTH nor would there be any changes in water consumption or discharge. There would be no impact on water bodies, floodplains, and fish.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The NPTH upgrades would occur within existing developed facilities where no wetlands are present. There would be no impact on wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or use of groundwater are proposed. The proposed project would have no impact on groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The underlying land use (aquaculture) would not change and no impact to specially-designated areas would occur as a result of this project.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed upgrades would change the visual quality of the NPTH. Upon completion there would be a new utility building; however, this change would be minor as the new building would be low profile and it would be consistent with other structures at the NPTH.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There may be increased amounts of dust and exhaust produced due to increased traffic, heavy equipment, and construction. The increased dust and exhaust would be minor and temporary, and BMPs would be used as needed for dust abatement. There would be no long-term effects to air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project is anticipated to increase noise during construction activities. Noise would be temporary and short-term and cause no long-term impacts.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All personnel would use BMPs 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 NPTH is on the Nez Perce Reservation and operated by the NPT. The proposed facility upgrades were developed and agreed upon by the design engineers at Alaska Energy Engineering LLC, the NPTH facility operators, the NPT, and BPA. Construction schedules and mobilization of heavy equipment would be coordinated with the NPTH.

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

Signed:

Lindsey Mills
Environmental Protection Specialist