

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: YTAHP Naneum Creek RM 3.75 Geotechnical Test Pits Project

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): B3.1 Site characterization and environmental monitoring

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 implement a geotechnical test pits project on private land near Ellensburg, Washington. The information from the test pits would be used to inform the final design of a fish passage improvement project located at the intersection of Naneum Creek at River Mile (RM) 3.75 and a private farm road. Naneum Creek is utilized by Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed Middle Columbia River steelhead, Chinook and coho salmon, and a suite of resident fishes.

KCCD would conduct geotechnical investigations to determine the composition of the subsoil at proposed locations for bridge footings. Geotechnical investigations would consist of excavating two large test pits measuring up to 15 feet in diameter and depth. There would be one pit on each side of Naneum Creek approximately 20 feet downstream of the existing intersection where the creek goes under the road via a culvert and approximately 35 feet from either bank of Naneum Creek. During excavation, material removed from the test pits would be placed in a pile adjacent to the pits. Once the composition of the subsoil is documented, the test pits would be backfilled with the native materials that were removed. Equipment would be stored in one staging area located in an adjacent farm field and access to the project sites would be from the existing farm road and fields. Ground disturbance is expected to be less than 1.5 acres including staging and access. Implementation would occur between June 22nd and July 2nd of 2026 and take approximately 2 days to complete.

These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with NMFS on the O&M of the Columbia River System. (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp). This action also supports 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 within the Naneum Creek Watershed of the Upper Yakima River Subbasin. Naneum Creek is a tributary to Wilson Creek, which is a tributary to the Yakima River at RM 147. The legal description is T17N, R19E, Sec 8. The elevation is about 1,550 feet. The surrounding area is used for agricultural crop production and grazing.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA initiated National Historic Preservation Section 106 consultation with the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (Colville), and Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (Yakama Nation) on April 7, 2026. DAHP concurred with the Area of Potential Effects on the same day. BPA submitted a survey report and determined on May 19, 2026, that the proposed geotechnical test pits would result in no historic properties affected. DAHP concurred with BPA's determination on the same day. No other comments were received during the 30-day comment period ending June 18, 2026.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation, BPA would require that work be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA and in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Soil would be displaced during excavation of the test pits. The pits would be backfilled with the excavated material following geotechnical investigation of the subsoil. Access to the test pit locations would be via the existing farm road and fields with no road or field modifications needed to complete the investigations. Sediment control best management practices would be installed prior to project implementation to minimize potential for excessive runoff during excavation and backfilling. Post implementation seeding of disturbed soils would minimize long-term erosion potential.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed or special-status plant species or habitats are known to be present. Temporary impacts to existing vegetation from equipment crushing some plants while accessing work areas. Post construction seeding would re-establish areas of disturbed vegetation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed or special-status wildlife species or habitats are known to be present. Temporary (about 2 days) impacts to area wildlife would occur from increased noise and vehicle traffic during testing. Wildlife would likely avoid the area during this time and return once the project work is completed. The proposed work would not involve permanent alterations to wildlife habitat.

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 project does not propose in-water work; however, sediment control best management practices would be installed prior to project implementation to minimize potential for excessive runoff during excavation and backfilling of test pits. Some minor disturbance to fish may occur during project activities due to human presence and noise from the excavator near the Naneum Creek. Any impact would be short term and limited to the immediate project area. Fish would likely avoid the area during this time and return once the project work is completed. Project activities would support ESA-listed fish conservation by informing the final design of a fish passage improvement project. Project activities are not expected to impact water bodies, or floodplains.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: None present in the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

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

8. Land Use and Specially Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project does not propose changes to land use; designated farmland would not be taken out of production.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project does not propose changes to visual quality. Project activities including excavation and vehicles would be visually consistent with agricultural activities and equipment.

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; there would be no long-term impacts to air quality.

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. This noise would not be noticeably different from the surrounding agricultural production noise.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work is not considered hazardous, nor does it result in any health or safety risks to the public. All work would occur on a private road and farmland. All applicable safety regulations would be followed during work 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 proposed work would not cause impacts to surrounding landowners. KCCD has coordinated with the underlying landowner 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