

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Yakama Nation's Gravel Sorting Project

Project No.: 1997-051-00

Project Manager: Daniel Newberry, EWU-4

Location: Yakima 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 Yakama Nation Fisheries Program (YN) to sort gravel within the Bear Canyon Rock Quarry on state land managed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) in Yakima County, Washington. The sorted gravel would be stored on site at the quarry for upcoming proposed gravel supplementation projects within the Tieton River for fish habitat improvement.

YN would sort native alluvial gravel removed as part of previously-completed projects implemented by Yakima County, Bureau of Reclamation, and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). Sorted gravel would be used by the YN to supplement spawning gravels at future habitat restoration sites. Sorting of materials would require the use of an excavator or front-end loader to lift material over the stationary sorting equipment and then dump it onto the sorting screen of the sorting equipment. YN's target gradation for the materials would be equal to or less than four inches (101 mm) in diameter. Once the material is sorted by size it would be separated and staged onsite at the Bear Canyon quarry to be used in future restoration actions.

These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System, and BPA's ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System on fish and wildlife on 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 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.

Catherine Clark
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 would take place within an existing rock quarry utilized for rock storage and stockpiling. Current vegetation within the quarry is primarily non-native or invasive weeds; however, adjacent to the rock quarry consists of sagebrush steppe and ponderosa pine forested areas. The quarry is located about 11 miles west of Naches, Washington and about 27 miles east of White Pass off U.S. Highway 12.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action has been evaluated by a BPA archeologist and was determined to have no potential to cause effect to cultural resources or historic properties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small amount of soil disturbance would be expected from heavy equipment during project actions of sorting gravels; however, the level of disturbance would be consistent with the current use of Bear Canyon quarry.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor disturbance to non-native weeds could occur in previously disturbed locations where gravel would be stored. There are no documented occurrences of special-status plant species, or plant species protected under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) in the project area or throughout the quarry.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no documented occurrences of special-status wildlife species or suitable habitat present in the project area. Minor and temporary disturbance of common wildlife species could occur from elevated noise during project actions. Because the work would be occurring in a quarry where these actions have occurred in the past, any wildlife present are likely used to the level of noise and human presence.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project site is not located in, or near any surface waters or fish bearing streams and is not located within a floodplain. Project actions are not anticipated to affect surface waters, fish, or fish-bearing streams. Future potential use of the sorted gravel in stream

restoration projects would benefit fish species, including ESA-listed species, such as mid-Columbia River steelhead and bull trout, in the Tieton River.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project site is not located within or near wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project actions would all occur on the ground's surface and would not reach depths affecting groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change in land use or specially designated areas as a result of this project.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project actions would occur in a location where similar actions occur regularly, therefore the visual quality of the area would remain consistent.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary and minor dust and vehicle emissions would increase in the local area from vehicle and equipment use during project implementation. The dust generated would be consistent with the typical use of the quarry.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project-related noise would be temporary and intermittent and would occur during daylight hours. Sorting noise would be consistent with baseline quarry activities. Vehicle noise would be consistent with other vehicles and equipment present in the project areas.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not generate or use hazardous materials and would not create conditions that would increase risk to human health and safety. No impact on human health and safety is expected as a result of project actions.

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: YN has obtained approval from WDFW for use of quarry for both sorting and storing of the gravels on site.

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

Signed:

Catherine Clark
Environmental Protection Specialist