

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Ahtanum Creek RM 13 Riparian Fence Line Installation

Project No.: 1996-035-01

Project Manager: Chad Baumler, EWL

Location: Yakima County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.11 Fencing; B1.20 Protection of cultural resources, fish and wildlife

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation's (YN) fisheries program to install about 0.4 miles of fencing within the riparian zone of the Ahtanum Creek at River Mile (RM) 13 on private land in Yakima County, Washington.

YN would install approximately 0.4 miles of fencing along the Ahtanum Creek. The fence line would protect the vegetated riparian zone along the Ahtanum Creek at RM 13 from cattle. The fence would be tied into an existing fence and be constructed of 5-strand barbed wire on wooden or metal fence posts following the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) specifications. Installation would be completed manually using hand tools brought in by pickup truck or ATV. Materials would be transported on site each day and no staging area would be required.

These actions would support the conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with National Marine Fisheries Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service on Operations and Maintenance of the Columbia River System. These actions also support the ongoing efforts to mitigate for the effect 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. (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 new fence would be installed to extend an existing fence line that was previously installed by NRCS in order to protect the riparian zone along Ahtanum Creek. The work area would be located in an agricultural area that is subject to cattle grazing.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On July 20, 2026, BPA completed a combined initiation and determination consultation (WA 2026 174) under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) on the proposed project. Consulting parties for the proposed project included the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (YN) and the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Properties (DAHP). BPA determined that the proposed project would result in no historic properties affected. DAHP concurred on July 20, 2026. No other responses were received within 30 days.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed fence installation would require light excavation to install fence posts; these actions would be minor and localized to the riparian zone edge.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed, or state special-status plant species are within the project area. Proposed actions would remove minimal plant species along the riparian zone edge. Therefore, there would be minimal effect to plant species and no effect to ESA-listed or state special-status plant species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed, yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) may be present on the properties; however, they have not been documented within the project areas. There would be no negative effect on ESA-listed or state-listed wildlife species, and long-term effect of maintaining and enhancing the riparian zone would have a long-term positive impact on ESA-listed and state-listed wildlife species, if present in the future.

There would be mild negative impacts to non-listed wildlife from some of the proposed project activities. Wildlife would potentially be disturbed by human presence and noise. The effect would be temporary and consistent with typical activities on adjacent lands. There would be no long-term negative effect on wildlife, and the effect of maintaining and

enhancing the riparian zone would have long-term positive impacts on local and migratory wildlife in the area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ahtanum Creek contains ESA-listed bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), and steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and their critical habitat. The proposed actions would not physically alter any aquatic habitat that listed species occupy and would not involve any in-water work. Therefore, there would be no adverse impacts to water bodies, floodplains, or fish. In the long term, the project would benefit fish species, including ESA-listed and state-listed species, by protecting riparian habitat.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are mapped wetlands located near the Ahtanum Creek property (USFWS National Wetlands Inventory), but there are no wetlands where the project actions would occur, so there would be no impacts to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or use of ground water are proposed. All support post holes would avoid excavation to depths that intersect groundwater. The proposed activities would have no long-term impact to groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minor changes to land use by removing access to cattle from the riparian zone, but there would be no impact to specially-designated areas. The landowner would continue managing the property for cattle use. In the long term, the installation of the fence line would support the protection of the riparian zone and Ahtanum Creek.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions would have little effect on visual quality. Minor changes such as fence installation would occur, but would not be noticeable or visually dominant in the landscape.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minor temporary effects to the air quality of the environment from exhaust due to vehicle use for the project actions as a result of this project. Normal conditions would return upon project completion.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would result in minor, temporary increase in ambient noise due to human presence, and use of vehicles and equipment. Normal conditions would return upon project completion.

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 general public. There would be no soil contamination or hazardous conditions and no CERCLA sites.

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: Project actions proposed by YN would be implemented by employees on private property. YN would work with appropriate landowners to property access and project approval.

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