

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Entiat Phase 3 (Stillwaters) Groundwater Testing Project

Project No.: 2009-003-00

Project Manager: Tori Bohlen, EWU-4

Location: Chelan 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 Yakama Nation Fisheries (YNF) to conduct groundwater testing along the Entiat River within the Stillwaters Reach on private and county-owned property in Chelan County, Washington (WA). Data collected from these tests would be used to inform a potential future aquatic habitat restoration project.

YNF would contract the excavation of five temporary test pits within the Entiat River floodplain using a tracked excavator. Each test pit would measure approximately 5 feet wide by 20 feet long and 8 to 12 feet deep. Once groundwater is reached, soil profiles would be recorded by a licensed geologist. A pump test would then be conducted at each pit to determine groundwater flow and volume.

Following the pump tests, piezometer wells would be installed. Each well would consist of a 3- to 5-inch diameter polyvinyl chloride (PVC) standpipe equipped with a piezometer (water level monitoring tool) and a data logger to measure water elevation and temperature over time. The standpipes would extend 3 to 4 feet above ground level. After well installations, excavated materials stockpiled adjacent to the pits would be backfilled and graded to match the original surface elevations.

The tracked excavator would access test pit locations via an existing private road and designated routes through the vegetated floodplain, avoiding mature trees. Upon completion, the excavator would exit along the same access route, using its bucket to scatter woody debris and brush over the track paths to minimize soil erosion potential. Native grass seeds would be distributed over the backfilled test pits and access routes.

Excavation, soil recording, pump testing, piezometer well installation, and seeding would occur in Fall 2026 over approximately two days.

Following installation of the piezometer wells, field personnel would access the wells on foot monthly to download logged data. After about one year, an excavator would remove the PVC standpipes, and all newly disturbed areas would be seeded with native grass.

Funding these activities supports conservation of Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations 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. Additionally, these activities support 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. (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.

Brenda Aguirre
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.

Proposed Action: Entiat Phase 3 (Stillwaters) Groundwater Testing Project

Project Site Description

The project area is located on private property and land owned and managed by the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust (CDLT) and in Chelan County, WA (T28N, R19E, Section 28), approximately 1 mile northwest of Brief at an elevation of about 1,700 feet. The surrounding landscape consists of mountainous terrain and a narrow river valley floodplain, dominated by ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir forests interspersed with grasslands and riparian areas. The project area is largely surrounded by the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, with primary land uses consisting of forestry, forest recreation, and rural residential properties. Entiat River Road (County Road #19) borders the north side of the river and project area.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: On March 9, 2026, BPA initiated National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 consultation for the project's Area of Potential Effects (APE) with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CCT), Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (YN), and the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). DAHP concurred with the APE the same day. On June 17, 2026, BPA consulted with the same parties regarding identification efforts and a determination of *No Historic Properties Affected*, which DAHP concurred on the same day. No additional comments were received from consulting parties by the end of the consulting period on July 17, 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 in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Soil would be temporarily displaced during test pit excavation and off-road equipment access. Stockpiled materials would be backfilled following testing and graded to match pre-existing surface elevations. Post-implementation seeding with native grass and scattering brush over off-road access routes would minimize erosion potential and ensure long-term soil stability.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA- or state-listed plant species have been recorded in or near the project area. Existing vegetation may experience temporary localized impacts from machinery access

and foot traffic. Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be implemented during entry and exit by the excavators to avoid damaging mature trees. Reseeding all disturbed ground with native grass seeds would stabilize topsoil, prevent invasive species establishment, and enhance long-term habitat quality.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Local wildlife may be temporarily disturbed by equipment noise and human activity.

State-listed species known to occur in the vicinity of the project area include the western gray squirrel (*Sciurus griseus*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), and Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*); however, suitable habitat for golden eagles is absent within the project area. Surrounding lands provide abundant cover and alternative habitat during activities. Habitat would not be permanently altered, and displaced wildlife would be expected to return after the project is completed. The proposed project is expected to improve vegetation, which would have a beneficial effect for wildlife species in the long term.

ESA-listed species with the potential to occur in the project area include the Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*), Mt. Rainier white-tailed ptarmigan (*Lagopus leucura rainierensis*), and yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*). Potential impacts to lynx, wolf, wolverine, and yellow-billed cuckoo would be minimized by following measures outlined in BPA's Habitat Improvement Program (HIP4) programmatic consultation with the USFWS. White-tailed ptarmigan is a high-elevation species with no known occurrences in or near the project area and is unlikely to be affected. Impacts to listed and non-listed wildlife species at the project site would be limited to the immediate project area, resulting in a temporary, small decrease in available habitat and temporary elevated noise disturbance.

Notes:

- YNF and its contractor would adhere to all design features outlined in BPA's ESA Section 7 HIP4 Programmatic Consultation with USFWS to minimize impacts to ESA-listed species and habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: ESA-listed bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), and steelhead (*O. mykiss*), along with designated critical habitats, are present within the Stillwaters Reach of the Entiat River. No separately listed state fish species have been recorded in the project area. The proposed actions would occur in the floodplain with no in-water work, and during the low-flow period for the river in late fall. Thus, there would be no impact to fish species or the Entiat River. Less than 0.5 acres of floodplain would be disturbed. Impacts to the floodplain at the project site would be limited to the immediate project area and post-implementation seeding with native grass would minimize erosion potential and ensure long-term soil stability.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Wetlands are not present in the project area. The proposed actions would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Temporary groundwater test pits and piezometer wells would not withdraw or divert water from the local aquifers.

Notes:

- Spill prevention measures would be present on site to prevent groundwater contamination.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Land use would not change as a result of the proposed actions.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Visual quality would have a minor change associated with excavation but would return to pre-project conditions upon revegetation with native grass seeds and would not change in the long term as a result of the proposed actions.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary generation of emissions associated with the use of excavation equipment onsite would occur.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary noise increases associated with vehicles and excavation equipment would occur.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All personnel would use BMPs to protect workers' health and safety.

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: Work would occur entirely on private land and property managed by the Chelan-Douglas Land Trust with the full knowledge and cooperation of the landowners. No further public outreach or broad coordination would be required.

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