

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: 2026 Salmon River Basin Fish Screen Maintenance, Replacement, and Construction Project

Project No.: 2007-399-00

Project Manager: Jennifer Lord, EWU-4

Location: Custer and Lemhi counties, Idaho

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine maintenance, B1.20 Protection of cultural resources, fish and wildlife habitat

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) to construct a new fish screen, replace five existing fish screen structures, and replace components at five existing fish screens in the Salmon River Basin in Lemhi and Custer counties. The proposed activities would improve fish passage at irrigation diversions for Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), steelhead (*O. mykiss*), bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), Snake River sockeye salmon (*O. nerka*), and resident fish; protect fish from entrapment in irrigation ditches and fields; and ensure proper function of the fish screens for future years.

The 11 fish screen structure locations (existing and proposed) are outlined in the table below. All fish screens have been designed according to criteria in the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) "Anadromous Salmonid Passage Facility Design Manual" (last updated February 2023) and would be installed or maintained according to all relevant criteria in BPA's Habitat Improvement Program biological opinions (HIP BiOps). At the five sites identified for non-recurring maintenance, the overall structures are still in good condition, but some mechanical components are deteriorating. Several of the individual rotary drum screens in each structure have substantial corrosion and are close to failing, which would result in compromised fish passage. The rotary drums would be replaced in-kind within the existing structure and would consist of replacement of the metal works and drive system, including drums, gear boxes, sprockets, steel frame, drive arms, and side and bottom seals.

Screen ID	Task	Waterbody	County	Land Ownership	Latitude, Longitude
S-09	Replace components	Salmon River	Lemhi	Private	45.246085, -113.892973
S-13/14	Replace components	Salmon River	Lemhi	Private	45.089867, -113.895404
S-28	Replace components	Salmon River	Lemhi	Private	44.458705, -114.222252
S-32	Replace components	Salmon River	Lemhi	Private	44.431889, -114.219237
L-41/42	Replace components	Lemhi River	Lemhi	Private	44.870092, -113.625427
SCC-01	New installation	Carmen Creek	Lemhi	Private	45.244347, -113.882901
SNF-02A	Full replacement	North Fork Salmon River	Lemhi	Private	45.424256, -113.994183

Screen ID	Task	Waterbody	County	Land Ownership	Latitude, Longitude
LHC-Hatchery	Full replacement	Hayden Creek	Lemhi	State	44.838077, -113.663946
SEFHC-01	Full replacement	Herd Creek	Custer	Private	44.15421, -114.30027
SEFHC-02	Full replacement	Herd Creek	Custer	Federal	44.149860, -114.295257
P-04	Full replacement	Pahsimeroi River	Custer	Private	44.656249, -114.023177

At the five sites identified for full replacement, a new fish screen structure would be constructed near the existing structure, which would be removed as part of the construction. At the new screen site, there is an existing irrigation diversion structure but no fish screen, so a new screen structure would be installed. Construction activity for each screen installation and removal would generally disturb less than 0.5 acres of land in total, although the area where work would be completed at each site may be across several acres. Construction would require removal and back fill of the existing fish screen structure (if present), including the associated ditch alignments and sediment basin; clearing and grubbing the new screen site with a track hoe; excavating the site for the screen structure, new ditch alignments and a sediment basin; preparing the subgrade; installing and backfilling a new concrete or steel modular rotary drum fish screen and control structure in the ditch; and trenching to install a bypass pipeline to connect the structure to existing diversion infrastructure and the river.

Similar actions would be undertaken for the installation of the new screen. In addition, the new screen would require replacement of the headgate structure at the existing point of diversion with one that meets Idaho Department of Water Resources requirements. Replacement would require excavation, preparation of the subgrade, and installation of a lockable and controllable head gate structure with measuring device and trash rack.

No existing points of diversion would be relocated. All sites would be accessed on existing roads. Any fencing that would need to be moved for screen installation would be replaced in the same location or nearby. Work would be completed using a track hoe or small excavator. All sites would be restored by hydroseeding disturbed areas following final grading.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills commitments under the 2020 NMFS Columbia River System Biological Opinion (CRS BiOp) and would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) CRS BiOp. These actions also 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.

JACQUELYN SCHEI
Jacquelyn Schei
Environmental Protection Specialist

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JACQUELYN SCHEI
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Concur:

SARAH BIEGEL
Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

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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: 2026 Salmon River Basin Fish Screen Maintenance, Replacement, and Construction Project

Project Site Description

Sites are located on existing irrigation ditches in conjunction with irrigation water diversion infrastructure in previously-disturbed riparian, agricultural, or grazing areas in the Upper Salmon Basin. Sites are along the Pahsimeroi River, Lemhi River, mainstem Salmon River, North Fork of the Salmon River, Carmen Creek, Hayden Creek, and Herd Creek. Closest communities to the sites include Ellis, Salmon, Challis, and Clayton, Idaho. Sites are in broad riparian floodplains within a sagebrush steppe ecosystem, and at locations where much of the floodplain and surrounding productive sagebrush steppe lands have been converted to agricultural and grazing uses supported by irrigation diversions from the rivers. The footprint of construction activity for each screen action is typically occupied by low-growing grasses, forbs, and shrubs.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A BPA archaeologist determined no consultation was necessary for the proposed replacement of components at five screen sites. Consultations were completed for the full replacement and new screen site in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. Details of each consultation are provided below.

SEFHC-02: On December 18, 2025, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) sent a consultation letter to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation (SBT) and no comments were received by the end of the 30-day review period. On January 26, 2026, the BLM initiated consultation with Idaho Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and made a finding of No Historic Properties Affected (BPA Cultural Resources No. ID 2026 021). On January 28, 2026, SHPO concurred with the BLM's determination. BPA has reviewed the BLM's consultation package and is tiering our Section 106 review off their review. The project finding is No Historic Properties Affected.

SNF-02A: On April 20, 2026, BPA sent a letter to consulting parties (SBT and SHPO) with a summary of the efforts made to identify historic properties and BPA's finding of No Adverse Effect to historic properties (BPA Cultural Resources No. ID 2026 017). On May 18, 2026, SHPO concurred with BPA's determination. No comments were received from the SBT by the end of the 30-day review period.

SEFHC-01: On April 21, 2026, BPA sent a letter to the SBT and SHPO with a summary of the efforts made to identify historic properties and BPA's finding of No Adverse Effect to historic properties (BPA Cultural Resources No. ID 2026 020). On April 28, 2026, SHPO responded with their own recommendation of No Historic Properties Affected. Under both determinations of effect, adverse effects to historic properties would be avoided. No comments were received from the SBT by the end of the 30-day review period.

SCC-01: On April 28, 2026, BPA sent a letter to the SBT and SHPO with a summary of the efforts made to identify historic properties and BPA's finding of No Adverse Effect to historic properties (BPA Cultural Resources No. ID 2026 018). On May 15, 2026, SHPO concurred with BPA's determination. No comments were received from the SBT by the end of the 30-day review period.

LHC-Hatchery: On April 28, 2026, BPA sent a letter to the SBT and SHPO with a summary of the efforts made to identify historic properties and BPA's finding of No Historic Properties Affected (BPA Cultural Resources No. ID 2026 019). On April 29, 2026, SHPO concurred with BPA's determination. No comments were received from the SBT by the end of the 30-day review period.

P-04: On May 28, 2026, BPA sent a letter to the SBT and SHPO with a summary of the efforts made to identify historic properties and BPA's finding of No Adverse Effect to historic properties (BPA Cultural Resources No. ID 2026 022). On June 4, 2026, SHPO concurred with BPA's determination. No comments were received from the SBT by the end of the 30-day review period.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minor impacts to geology and soils from vehicle access at the five screen sites where only components are being replaced. At the other sites, there would be temporary impacts on geology and soils due to displacement and compaction of soil from the operation of heavy equipment to install new screen structures and remove old structures. With the exception of SCC-01, all sites have been previously disturbed by heavy construction equipment used to install the current screen structures. All screen sites are near agricultural and grazing activities and while it may be possible that previously unaltered soils are impacted at some sites, it would be minor. Construction at screen sites would disturb less than 0.5 acre. Impacts from construction actions would be minimized by the application of best management practices to control erosion and prevent spills. Disturbed areas around the new structures and the area where old structures were would be graded to match existing ground and hydroseeded after construction to facilitate soil recovery.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed, state, or BLM-managed special-status plant species are present in project locations. Fish screens would be in, or near, riparian areas, but the sites would be in locations disturbed by agricultural and grazing activities. There would be minor impacts to vegetation from excavation and trampling by vehicles and crews. No native shrub or woodland riparian plant communities would be impacted and disturbed soils would be hydroseeded after construction to provide for long-term recovery of native plant species at the sites.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The USFWS Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC) tools list the Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*), and the yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), all ESA-listed Threatened, as having the potential to be in one or more of the project areas. In addition, IPaC lists the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*), ESA-proposed Threatened, and Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee (*Bombus suckleyi*), ESA-proposed Endangered, as having the potential to be present in one or more of the project areas. There are no designated critical habitats for ESA-listed or proposed species in any of the project areas. There is no confirmed presence of any of the species in or near project areas, except for grizzly bears. While sites are at elevations above 3,000 feet, all are surrounded by agricultural operations, near major roads (e.g., Highways 28, 75, and 93), and close to one or more residences. The irrigation ditches and areas around screen sites have little mature, native riparian vegetation and are typically surrounded by low-growing grasses, forbs, and shrubs. The USFWS 2023 species status assessment for Canada lynx shows that the current distribution in Idaho is limited to the northern part of the state near the border with Canada and near Lolo Pass on the border with Montana. The closest screen site is 90 miles to the

south of Lolo Pass. Suitable habitat for Canada lynx and wolverine (specifically resident and maternal habitat) consists of forested mountain areas and consistent snowpack. The yellow-billed cuckoo is dependent on intact riparian cottonwood-willow habitats. Due to current agricultural land use practices, limited native vegetation, nearby residences, and the proximity of major roads near screen sites, it is unlikely lynx, wolverine, yellow-billed cuckoo, or ESA-proposed wildlife species would be present in project areas; therefore, the actions would have no effect. There are no BLM-managed special-status species within the project area.

There have been confirmed sightings of grizzly bears in the North Fork Salmon River area within the last five years. The SNF-02A screen site is along the North Fork Salmon River. IDFG details on grizzly management in the state show that the closest recovery zone (RZ) to this location is the Bitterroot RZ and as of 2020, there were no known grizzly bear populations in the Bitterroot RZ. It is likely recent sightings are bears migrating through the area to other RZs. Based on this, as well as the project's short duration and availability of adjacent habitat for dispersal, the project may affect but is not likely to adversely affect grizzly bears dispersing through the area. The project would follow the conservation measures in BPA's HIP BiOps to minimize potential impacts.

Bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) are present in Lemhi and Custer counties year-round. There is no confirmed presence of nests or previously used nest sites for either species in the project areas. Screen sites are typically in areas without much tree coverage because they are on agricultural fields. None of the sites contain preferred habitats for eagles and it is expected none would be encountered during project activities. Therefore, the proposed actions would have no impact to bald and golden eagles. However, if a nest is observed in any project area, IDFG would employ protection measures (e.g., timing, distance) as necessary to ensure eagles would not be taken or otherwise harmed as a result of the proposed actions.

Construction would occur in late summer or fall; thus, no disturbance of nesting birds would occur. No wildlife habitat would be modified to a degree that would permanently displace resident wildlife, though some may be temporarily displaced by disturbance from construction activities and human presence. Wildlife in the area are acclimated to temporary disturbances from regular screen maintenance and agricultural operations, nearby residences, and major roads near most screen sites, and wildlife should return quickly to the area upon completion of construction.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Fish screen construction would be in and along irrigation ditches near the Lemhi, Pahsimeroi, and Salmon rivers and Carmen, Herd, and Hayden creeks where ESA-listed spring Chinook salmon, sockeye salmon, steelhead, and bull trout are present. Work would mainly occur behind closed diversions in the dry season, so there would be no instream work and no impact to ESA-listed fish species. The exception would be the installation of a new headgate at the SCC-01 site. Replacement of the headgate at the point of diversion would require that the work area be isolated from the flowing creek using a coffer dam. If fish cannot be herded out of the isolated work area, a fish salvage would occur to remove any fish present before dewatering the area and proceeding with construction. Conservation measures from BPA's HIP BiOps would be applied to minimize impacts.

The proposed work would not result in changes to diversion rates, water bodies, or floodplains.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present at the project sites. All sites have been previously disturbed and are now used for industrial or agricultural purposes. There would be no effect to wetlands from the proposed actions.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Fish screens have no potential to impact groundwater or aquifers. They do not withdraw water from either surface or groundwater sources. Replacement of screen components and the operation of construction equipment to remove or install screens may have short-term, minor impacts on water quality from possible fuel or other fluid drips or spills, but conservation measures from BPA's HIP BiOps would be applied that would minimize or prevent this potential.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change to land use. All fish screens would be constructed on Federal, state and/or private agricultural lands and are intended to support continued agricultural activities by protecting ESA-listed fish during delivery of irrigation water. There are no specially-designated areas that overlap screen sites.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Replacement of components or the fish screen structures would not be changing the visual quality at existing fish screen sites as the equipment would essentially be the same as what is there now. The new fish screen would be added to an existing irrigation ditch, so there would be new equipment that could be seen at the site. Given that all occur in agricultural areas, there would be no long-term impacts to visual quality. There would be short-term scenery impacts from the presence of construction equipment, excavation, and vegetation removal.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Operation of construction equipment and vehicles accessing the sites would produce emissions, but the amount would be minimal, short-term, and consistent with that produced by local agricultural activities. Air quality would be expected to return to normal after construction is complete.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Noise sources would be from trucks and construction equipment. Noise would be consistent with that produced by local agricultural activities and vehicles on nearby roads and would be short-term. These impacts would occur during daylight hours during the summer and fall months.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed screen installation work is not considered hazardous nor does it result in any health or safety risks to the general public. No long-term public safety hazards would be created. Routine, short-term, safety hazards would be expected from the incremental addition of truck traffic on local roads, the operation of construction equipment, and the use of hand tools. Staff training and implementing best management practices, such as daily on-site safety precautions, would minimize that risk during construction 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: IDFG has coordinated with Federal, state, and private landowners to develop plans and identify specific locations where proposed actions would be implemented, as well as for ongoing maintenance at screen sites. Construction schedules and mobilization of heavy equipment would be coordinated with the parties involved at each site.

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

Signed: **JACQUELYN SCHEI**
Jacquelyn Schei
Environmental Protection Specialist

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JACQUELYN SCHEI
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