Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: 2026 Little Salmon River Fish Screen Replacement Project

Project No.: 2007-399-00

Project Manager: Jennifer Lord, EWU-4

Location: Idaho County, 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 replace an existing fish screen structure along the Little Salmon River. Replacing the screen would improve fish passage at the irrigation diversion for Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), steelhead (*O. mykiss*), bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), and resident fish; protect fish from entrapment in irrigation ditches and fields; and ensure proper function of the fish screen in future years.

The site currently supports an aging fish screen structure (screen ID: SLS-01) that would be removed and replaced with a new structure designed according to criteria in the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) “Anadromous Salmonid Passage Facility Design Manual” (last updated February 2023). The new structure would be constructed near the existing structure. Construction activity would generally disturb less than 0.5 acres of land in total, although the area where work would be completed may be across several acres. Construction would require removal and back fill of the existing fish screen structure including the associated ditch alignments and sediment basin; clearing and grubbing the new screen site; excavating the site for the new screen structure, new ditch alignments and a sediment basin; preparing the subgrade; installing and backfilling a new concrete 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. Construction would occur behind a closed diversion in the dry season, so instream work would not be required at the site.

The existing point of diversion would remain where it is. The site would be accessed via existing roads. Any existing 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. The site would be restored by hydroseeding 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
Digitally signed by JACQUELYN SCHEI
Date: 2026.10.30 13:41:18 -07'00'

Jacquelyn Schei
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

KATEY GRANGE
Digitally signed by KATEY GRANGE
Date: 2026.10.30 13:58:09 -07'00'

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.

Proposed Action: 2026 Little Salmon River Fish Screen Replacement Project

Project Site Description

The site is on property owned by IDFG in the Little Salmon River Valley, about 2.5 miles southwest of Riggins in Idaho County, Idaho. The site is generally flat with an elevation of about 2,000 feet and contains an existing irrigation ditch and water diversion infrastructure. It lies in a previously-disturbed area between Highway 95 (about 50 feet away) and the Little Salmon River (about 200 feet away). The river's floodplain is constricted by the highway, residences, and agricultural fields. The site contains low-growing grasses, forbs, shrubs, and some mature trees growing along the irrigation ditch and closer to the river.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On September 29, 2026, BPA sent a letter to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation (SBT) and the Idaho Historic Preservation Office (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 023). On October 26, 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 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. The site has been previously disturbed by heavy construction equipment used to install the current screen structure and was likely disturbed by highway construction decades ago. Construction would disturb less than 0.5 acres. Impacts from construction actions would be minimized by the application of best management practices to control erosion and prevent spills. Soils where the old structure is removed would be graded to match existing ground and hydroseeded after construction to facilitate soil recovery, as would disturbed areas around the new structure.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The screen site is in an area previously disturbed by agricultural activities and highway construction. There would be minor impacts to vegetation over about 0.5 acres from excavation and trampling by vehicles and crews. No ESA-listed or state special-status plant species are present in project locations. The USFWS Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC) tool lists the MacFarlane's four-o'clock (*Mirabilis macfarlanei*) and the Spalding's catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*), both ESA-listed as Threatened, as having the potential to be in the project area. There are no known occurrences for either species and no critical habitat in or near the project area; therefore, the project would have no effect to ESA-listed species. 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: Construction activities and human presence would temporarily disturb wildlife. Wildlife are acclimated to temporary disturbances in this area from regular screen maintenance and agricultural operations, nearby residences, and highway traffic. There is similar habitat adjacent to the project area that displaced wildlife may use during construction and wildlife are expected to return quickly to the area upon completion of construction. No wildlife habitat would be modified to a degree that would permanently displace resident wildlife. Construction would occur in late fall; thus, no disturbance of nesting birds would occur.

The IPaC tool lists the North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*), ESA-listed Threatened, as having the potential to be in the project area. 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 the project area. There are no designated critical habitats for ESA-listed or proposed species in any of the project areas and no confirmed presence of any of the species in or near the project area. Therefore, the project would have no impact to ESA-listed or proposed species. There are no state special-status species known to occur in the area.

Bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) are present in Idaho County year-round. There is no confirmed presence of nests or previously used nest sites for either species in the project area. Work would occur outside of breeding season (in late fall); however, if a nest is observed, 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 project.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction would be in and along the irrigation ditch near the Little Salmon River where ESA-listed spring Chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout are present. Work would occur behind a closed diversion after the diversion is dewatered, so there would be no instream work and no negative impact to ESA-listed fish species. The proposed work would not result in changes to diversion rates, water bodies, or floodplains. In the long term, fish, including ESA-listed fish species, would benefit from the project through improved fish passage and decreased entrainment.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present at the project site. The site has been previously disturbed and is now used for agricultural purposes. There would be no effect to wetlands from the proposed action.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or use of groundwater is proposed. Spill prevention measures would be present on site to limit the risk of groundwater contamination.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change to land use. The project would occur on land owned by IDFG that is intended to continue to support fish screening activities along the irrigation ditch. There are no specially-designated areas that overlap the site.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Replacement of the fish screen structure would not change the visual quality at the site as the equipment would essentially be the same as what is there now. There would be no long-term impacts to visual quality. There would be short-term scenery impacts from the presence of construction equipment, excavation, vegetation removal, and post-construction hydroseeding.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Operation of construction equipment and vehicles accessing the site would produce emissions, but the amount would be minimal, short-term, and consistent with that produced by local agricultural activities and less than that produced by traffic on the highway. 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 the highway and would be short-term. These impacts would occur during daylight hours during the fall.

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 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: The site is owned by IDFG and is intended to continue to support fish screening activities.

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

Signed: JACQUELYN SCHEI

Digitally signed by JACQUELYN SCHEI
Date: 2026.10.30 13:41:42 -07'00'

Jacquelyn Schei
Environmental Protection Specialist