

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Upper Salmon Basin Fish Screen Construction

Project No.: 2007-399-00

Project Manager: Cecelia Brown

Location: Lemhi and Custer Counties, Idaho

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 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 Idaho Fish and Game to construct four fish screens on private lands in the Upper Salmon River Basin in Lemhi and Custer Counties.

Fish screens are structures that prevent fish entrapment in irrigation ditches or irrigated fields, and BPA's purpose in their funding is to prevent entrapment and mortality of Endangered Species Act-listed Chinook salmon, sockeye salmon, steelhead, and bull trout. Each structure has been designed according to criteria in the National Marine Fisheries Service's "Anadromous Salmonid Passage Facility Design" (NMFS, Northwest Region, Portland, Oregon, 2011). Each has been reviewed and approved by a NMFS Engineer for fish passage and would be installed according to all relevant criteria in the (NMFS) HIP Biological Opinion (NMFS 2020). The footprint of construction activity for each screen action would generally impact less than ¼ acre. The names and locations of these structures are shown in the table below.

Table 1 Names and locations of fish screens to be constructed

| Screen name | Water body | County | Latitude/Longitude |
|--------------|----------------|--------|-------------------------|
| L-10 | Lemhi River | Lemhi | 45.102990 / -113.730446 |
| L-15 | Lemhi River | Lemhi | 45.080023 / -113.716156 |
| L-16/17 | Lemhi River | Lemhi | 45.070424 / -113.70568 |
| Champion 01A | Champion Creek | Custer | 44.013704 / -114.791309 |

Findings: In accordance with Section 1021.410(b) 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), BPA has determined that the proposed action:

- (1) fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D (see attached Environmental Checklist);
- (2) does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; and
- (3) has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

/s/ Robert W. Shull

Robert W Shull
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
CorSource Technology Group

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: June 2, 2020

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Checklist

This checklist 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

These fish screens are located on existing or re-designed irrigation ditches in conjunction with irrigation water diversion infrastructure in previously-disturbed riparian, agricultural, or grazing areas along the Lemhi River (L-10, L-15, L-16/17) and along Champion Creek (Champion 01A), a tributary of the Salmon River above Stanley, Idaho.

The Lemhi River and Champion Creek are tributaries to the Salmon River in east-central Idaho. The project sites are primarily 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 these rivers/creeks.

The construction sites are in riparian areas within agricultural fields or pastures, in a setting that had naturally been sagebrush steppe prior to conversion to agricultural or grazing use. Each site has been previously disturbed, and supports an aging fish screen that is being replaced with a new design. The footprint of construction activity for each screen action is occupied by low-growing grasses, forbs, and shrubs. No trees are present on the construction sites.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

**Environmental Resource
Impacts**

**No Potential for
Significance**

**No Potential for Significance,
with Conditions**

1. Historic and Cultural Resources



Explanation: Fish Screen construction requires the use of heavy equipment which would have the potential to disturb cultural resources. Each site has had a completed cultural survey and consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. These consultations were with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Shoshone Bannock Tribes-Fort Hall Indian Reservation, the Nez Perce Tribe, Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, and the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation. Results of surveys and consultations are displayed in the table below.

| Project site | Survey finds | Eligibility for National Register of Historic Places | Effects determination and SHPO concurrence date |
|--------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Champion Creek 01A Fish Screen | Isolated feature; two irrigation ditches | Both ditches eligible; isolated feature not eligible | No adverse effect; March 3, 2020 |
| L-10 | riverbank channelization; irrigation ditch; Debris dump; historic Old State Highway 28 | Only Hwy 28 is eligible, but the section in the project area does not contribute to eligibility | No adverse effect; December 19, 2019 |
| L-15 | L-15 ditch | No | No historic properties affected, March 20, 2020 |
| L-16/17 | L-16 ditch and L-17 ditch | Yes | No adverse effect; March 3, 2020 |

During construction, protocols would be in place to stop construction and notify BPA for applicable consultation if new cultural resources are discovered.

2. Geology and Soils



Explanation: Soils would be displaced, compacted, and mixed by the actions of construction equipment, but these impacts would occur on sites that have previously been disturbed by heavy construction equipment when the original fish screens were constructed, and by agricultural and grazing activities. There would likely be little previously-unaltered soils impacted. These sites would be less than ¼ acre in size, and impacts from construction actions would be minimized by the application of Conservation Measures (erosion control, spill prevention, etc.) from BPA's Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation

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



Explanation: The Lemhi River fish screens would be in, or near, riparian areas, but the sites would be in locations previously disturbed by agricultural and grazing activities; no native shrub or woodland riparian plant communities would be impacted. The Champion Creek 01A site includes willows and other riparian shrubs which would be removed from about 1/20th of an acre (2,000 square feet) during construction. This however, represents an insignificant fraction of the amount of riparian shrub plant community in this immediate area, and recovery of much of the site to riparian shrubs is anticipated after construction. In addition, conservation measures from BPA's HIP ESA consultation would be applied which would provide for long term recovery of the sites and adjacent riparian vegetation.

No ESA-listed, or "special status" plant species are present in these locations.

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

Explanation: Construction would commence in summer or fall, thus little disturbance of nesting birds would occur. There would be some home range destruction and displacement of small terrestrial and avian wildlife within the expanded footprints of the new fish screens, but this loss would be a few hundred square feet at most and would be of minimal effect to animal populations in the project areas. Larger wildlife using riparian habitats nearby may be disturbed and temporarily displaced by noise and human presence during the construction actions. These larger species would likely not be displaced from their home ranges, though they may temporarily relocate as long as active construction is occurring.

No ESA-listed, or "special status" wildlife species are present in locations close enough to these construction sites to be disturbed.

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

Explanation: No construction activities would occur in flowing water. The L-10, L-15, and L-16/17 fish screens would be installed in irrigation ditches outside of the irrigation season or with the ditch flow turned off, and the Champion Creek fish screen project would require the stream to be dewatered/re-routed during construction. Fish and other aquatic organisms would be impacted during dewatering at Champion Creek, but this would be far less impactful than working in the live stream. Conservation measures from the BPA's HIP ESA consultation would be applied to all dewatering and fish salvage activities to minimize impacts and effects to aquatic species.

ESA-listed spring Chinook, steelhead, and bull trout could potentially be affected by the single-season, short-term dewatering, but these projects are designed specifically for their long term protection.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: No wetlands are present at the project sites. There would be no effect.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: Fish screens have no potential to impact ground water or aquifers. They do not withdraw water from either surface or ground sources. The operation of construction equipment activities may have short-term potential to impact water quality slightly from possible fuel or other fluid drips or spills, but conservation measures from BPA's HIP ESA consultation would be applied that would prevent or minimize this potential.

8. **Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas**

Explanation: There would be no change to land uses. All fish screens would be constructed on private agricultural lands, and are intended to support continued agricultural activities by protecting ESA-listed fish during delivery of irrigation water.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: These new fish screens would be replacing existing fish screens, so there would be no long-term change to visual quality. There would be short-term impacts from the presence of construction equipment and vegetation removal (until revegetation measures succeed in green-up).

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: Driving of trucks and operation of construction equipment would produce emissions, but the amount would be minimal and short-term, and consistent with that produced by local agricultural activities.

11. **Noise**



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

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: No long-term public safety hazards would be created with this project. Routine, short-term, safety hazards would be expected from the incremental addition of truck traffic on local roads, and the operation of construction equipment.

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, if necessary:

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: Land owners and water users associated with the irrigation diversions at which these screens are located have already been informed by IDFG of these replacements. Construction would proceed following notification of the affected land owners and irrigation water users.

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

Signed: /s/ Robert W Shull
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Date: June 2, 2020