

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Kalispel Tribe Resident Fish Habitat O&M

**Project No.:** 1995-001-00

**Project Manager:** Lee Watts

**Location:** Bonner County, Idaho and Pend Oreille County, Washington

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B1.3 Routine maintenance; B1.20 Protection of cultural resources, fish, and wildlife habitat; B3.3 Research related to conservation of fish, wildlife, and cultural resources

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Kalispel Tribe's ongoing resident fish habitat operations and maintenance (O&M) in northeastern Washington and northwestern Idaho. BPA would continue funding for this program to mitigate for the altered hydrology caused by the operation of Albeni Falls Dam with the goal of restoring habitat for westslope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi*) and Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*). These actions would support the conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with USFWS on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System (2020 FWS CRS BiOp), in addition to supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for the 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.).

Project activities would include:

## **Fencing Maintenance**

Existing exclusion fencing at Whiteman Creek, Fourth of July Creek, and Middle Branch LeClerc Creek would be inspected and repaired as needed. Roughly two miles of existing fencing along the three streams would be maintained. Maintenance would include splicing barbed wire lines where broken, replacing damaged and broken posts, and re-hanging any fencing knocked down by vandalism, wildlife, or the elements. All replacement would be like-for-like and no new fencing segments would be constructed.

## **Goose Creek Channel Reconstruction Project Monitoring and Surveys**

The Kalispel Tribe's Goose Creek channel reconstruction project was completed in 2018 and involved the reconstruction of a section of Goose Creek to reintegrate the floodplain and install habitat forming woody structures and vegetation. Monitoring the project site would continue to ensure that project goals are being achieved. This monitoring would include conducting macroinvertebrate surveys using a Hess sampler and visual surveys of vegetation and wildlife.

These surveys would be compared to results of past surveys to determine if desirable vegetation and wildlife is successfully colonizing the project area and to determine if there is an increased abundance of species within the new channel compared to pre-project conditions. In-stream woody habitat structures installed during project implementation would also be monitored to determine if habitat structures are having the desired effects of creating fish and wildlife habitat in the reconstructed stream channel. Finally, sediment mapping would be conducted using an aerial LIDAR survey to compare the floodplain surface with pre-project conditions and determine if further floodplain grading to restore interaction with the stream would be required in future years. All survey data collected would be used to inform future habitat improvement plans for the project site.

### **Infrastructure at Goose Creek Channel Reconstruction Project Maintenance**

The access road and earthen dike at the Goose Creek project site would also be maintained. Gravel would be added to the road to fill potholes as needed and the road would be plowed of snow during winter months using small machinery to ensure safe year-round access. The dike would be inspected to ensure that it maintains its structure and effectiveness. Hand tools (shovels, etc.) and small equipment (mini excavator, skid steer, etc.) would be used to reinforce the dike if needed. All work would be within the existing road prism and dike footprint and there would be no new construction.

**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/ Thomas DeLorenzo

Thomas DeLorenzo

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer

July 26, 2022

Date

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.

**Proposed Action: Kalispel Tribe Resident Fish Habitat O&M**

## **Project Site Description**

Project activities would take place in streams in the Pend Oreille subbasin in northeastern Washington and northwestern Idaho.

Whiteman Creek, Fourth of July Creek, and Middle Branch LeClerc Creek are small tributary streams of the Pend Oreille River located in east-central Pend Oreille County, Washington. The streams lie east of the Pend Oreille River and enter the river between the towns of Locke and Tiger, Washington. The streams run through portions of the Coleville National Forest. Exclusion fences were established around areas of these creeks where habitat remediation projects were undertaken in the past to prevent grazing from wildlife and trespassing cattle. The areas surrounding these creeks are dominated by riparian forests, with limited grass clearings and fields interspersed throughout.

Goose Creek is a tributary of the Priest River, itself a major tributary of the Pend Oreille River in Bonner County in northwestern Idaho. The Goose Creek reconstruction project re-channelized a portion of Goose Creek between 2016 and 2018. This area lies in the Big Meadows Wildlife Management Area owned by the Kalispel Tribe and is located roughly 6.5 miles southwest of Priest Lake and 1.5 miles east of the Idaho-Washington border. The area is mostly open grassland with some riparian forest to the south of the project area.

## **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A BPA archaeologist reviewed the proposed actions and determined that there would be no potential to effect historic and cultural resources (BPA CR Project No. ID 2022 025).

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Access to project locations would be along existing roadways and would cause no new ground disturbance. There would be minor ground disturbance from maintenance of the roads and dike at Goose Creek, but all work would be limited to the existing road prism and dike footprint. Fence maintenance would not require any new ground disturbance, and any new posts would be like-for-like replacements of existing posts.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed plant species are present in the project area (United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC)). Washington state-listed endangered Michigan moonwort (*Botrychium michiganense*) has the potential to occur in Pend Oreille County (Washington Department of Natural Resources). However, this species is typically only found in sandy dune systems and would not be present at the project locations. No Idaho state-listed species of endangered plants are present in Bonner County (Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation).

Work sites would be accessed by existing infrastructure and no projects would require interacting directly with vegetation. As a result, no effects to plant species would occur.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed Canada lynx (*Lynx Canadensis*), grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), and Yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) have the potential to occur at the project sites (IPaC). The project areas are far below the typical elevation and outside the typical spruce and fir forests where lynx are found. Grizzly bear are likewise unlikely to be found near project sites during project activities due to their avoidance of noise and human presence. Yellow-Billed Cuckoo typically nest in dense riparian woodlands similar to those that can be found around the project sites. However, no work would occur that would alter or affect these forests. As a result, the actions would have no effect on these species. No Washington or Idaho state-listed species of endangered animals are present in the project area (Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Idaho Governor's Office of Species Conservation).

To the extent that any wildlife would be disturbed by human presence (noise, shadows, etc.) during project activities, the effects would be temporary and cause no lasting impacts.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No anadromous fish species are present due to anthropogenic blockages downriver of the project locations. ESA-listed bull trout and bull trout critical habitat are present in the Pend Oreille River and its tributaries. Bull trout would not be affected by project activities. Fence, road, and dike maintenance would not occur within waterbodies. Visual surveys would also have no effect on fish. In-stream macroinvertebrate surveys would use a Hess sampler – a hand-installed substrate sampling device with no ingress large enough for fish to enter – and therefore have no effect on bull trout beyond minimal disruption from human presence during installation. As a result, project activities would have no effect on bull trout or their habitat.

To the extent that any fish would be disturbed by human presence (noise, shadows, etc.) during project activities, the effects would be temporary and cause no lasting impacts.

Installing the Hess sampler would temporarily increase turbidity in the Goose Creek stream. However, due to the small size of the sampler, the effects would be extremely minor and dissipate within minutes. There would be no other effects on water bodies or floodplains from project actions.

## 6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Portions of the area around the Goose Creek project site are classified as palustrine emergent persistent wetlands (USFWS National Wetlands Inventory). Project activities would not affect this wetland. Surveys and monitoring would not alter or affect the wetland. Routine maintenance of the access road and dike would occur solely in the existing road prism and dike footprint, respectively, and would not alter or affect the wetland.

Narrow bands of mapped wetlands are present around the streams near fencing maintenance sites (USFWS National Wetlands Inventory). However, these fencing segments are located outside of the mapped wetlands and fence maintenance would therefore not affect wetlands.

## 7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or groundwater use are proposed. There would be no changes to groundwater as a result of these activities.

## 8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No changes to existing land uses are proposed.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities are solely for routine maintenance and monitoring and would not result in any changes to the existing visual quality of project sites.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Vehicles used to access project sites would create exhaust emissions. Small machinery (mini excavators, trucks with snowplows, etc.) that would be used for maintaining the access road and dike would also generate exhaust. However, these effects would be minor, temporary, and cause no lasting changes to air quality.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Vehicles and equipment would create an increase in ambient noise. However, these effects would be minor and temporary.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All personnel would use best practices to ensure human health and safety. Machinery would be operated solely by trained and licensed personnel.

### **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 exclusion fences to be maintained are on land owned by the Colville National Forest (U.S. Forest Service (USFS)). The Kalispel Tribe owns the area surrounding the Goose Creek project site. Existing public and private roads would be used to access sites. The project sponsor would coordinate with USFS as necessary to ensure access to fencing sites. No other external 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: /s/ Thomas DeLorenzo

Thomas DeLorenzo, ECF-4  
Environmental Protection Specialist

July 26, 2022

Date