

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Upper Salmon and Lemhi River Fish Screen Construction/Replacement 2023

Project No.: 2007-399-00

Project Manager: Cecilia Brown - EWM

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 and replace five fish screens on private lands in the Upper Salmon River Basin in Lemhi and Custer Counties.

Each site currently supports an aging fish screen that would be replaced with a new design. 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 (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), and bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*). 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) and would be installed according to all relevant criteria in the Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) Biological Opinions (NMFS 2020, USFWS 2020). The footprint of construction activity for each screen action would generally impact less than ¼ acre. Construction would require removal of the existing fish screen, clearing and grubbing the site with a track hoe, excavating and preparing the subgrade, installing and backfilling the new concrete rotary-drum fish screen and control structure in the ditch, then restoring the site by hydro-seeding following final grading.

The names and locations of these structures are shown in the table below.

Screen name	Water body	County	Latitude/Longitude
L-51	Lemhi River	Lemhi	44.766959, -113.506825
L-51a	Lemhi River	Lemhi	44.762665, -113.501565
L-40	Lemhi River	Lemhi	44.875132, -113.628379
Elk Creek-01	Elk Creek	Custer	44.290473, -115.027521
Valley Creek-05/06	Little Big Springs Creek	Custer	44.310285, -115.054694

This Proposed Action fulfills commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion and would support conservation of Endangered Species Act-listed species considered in the 2020 Endangered Species Act consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on the operation and maintenance of the Columbia River System. These actions also supports ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the FCRPS 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 1021.410(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 C. Grange May 15, 2023
Katey C. Grange Date
NEPA Compliance Officer

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: Upper Salmon and Lemhi River Fish Screen Construction/Replacement 2023

Project Site Description

These fish screens are located on existing irrigation ditches in conjunction with irrigation water diversion infrastructure in previously-disturbed riparian, agricultural, or grazing areas along the Lemhi River, a tributary of the Salmon River above Salmon, Idaho; and in tributary streams to the Salmon River above Stanley, Idaho.

The project 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 this river.

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 would be 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

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

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, and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. Results of surveys and consultations with SHPO are displayed in the table below. There was no response from the tribes.

Fish Screen	Resources identified	Eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places	Effects Determination and SHPO concurrence
L-51	L-51 ditch	eligible under Criterion A	No adverse effect
L-51a	L-51a ditch	eligible under Criterion A	No adverse effect
L-40	L-40 ditch	eligible under Criterion A	No adverse effect
Elk Creek-01	SVCEC-01 Ditch	eligible under Criterion A	No adverse effect
Valley Creek-05/06	SVC-0506 Ditch	eligible under Criterion A	No adverse effect

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Soils would be displaced, compacted, and mixed by the actions of construction equipment, but these impacts would occur on sites that have been previously 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)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The 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. 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)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction would commence in late summer or fall; thus, no 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)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No construction activities would occur in flowing water. All fish screens would be installed in irrigation ditches outside of the irrigation season or with the ditch flow turned off.

ESA-listed spring Chinook, steelhead, and bull trout are present in the nearby Lemhi River, Elk Creek, and Valley Creek and would benefit from the project. There would be no negative effect to these species since all work would be conducted on dry land with no activity or impact in the river or creek.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

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

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. The operation of construction equipment activities may have a 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

Potential for Significance: No

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

Potential for Significance: No

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 scenery impacts from the presence of construction equipment and vegetation removal (until revegetation measures succeed in green-up).

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

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

Potential for Significance: No

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 late summer and fall months.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

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: 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: 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, and in cooperation with, 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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May 15, 2023
Date