

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Oregon Fish Screens: Fields Creek Screens and Headgates

Project No.: 1993-066-00

Project Manager: Allan Whiting, EWL-4

Location: Grant County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B 1.20 Protection of Cultural Resources, Fish and Wildlife Habitat.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to install fish screens, headgates, and water measuring devices at multiple locations in Grant County, Oregon. The project sites are located on irrigation ditches that receive flow from Fields Creek, which is a tributary of the Upper Mainstem John Day River. The sites and proposed activities are identified in the table below.

Location Name	Latitude	Longitude	Activity Description
Fields Creek #6	44.41044	-119.30539	Install screen, headgate, and water measuring device
Fields Creek #6A	44.41386	-119.30544	
Fields Creek #7	44.41864	-119.30253	
Fields Creek #2	44.39712	-119.30751	Install headgate
Fields Creek #3	44.39779	-119.30674	
Fields Creek #4	44.40382	-119.30584	
Fields Creek #8	44.41897	-119.30321	
Fields Creek #9	44.42072	-119.30274	

Any existing screens would be removed, and new gravity fish screen systems would be installed in the irrigation ditches at three sites (Fields Creek #6, 6A, and 7). The new screens would consist of prefabricated steel screen boxes and related components. A sharp-crested weir (water measuring device) would be placed within each structure downstream of the screen. A 10-inch-diameter high-density polyethylene (HDPE) pipe would be installed at each fish screen to safely return fish from the front of the screen to Fields Creek.

An excavator and/or backhoe would be used to remove the existing screen structures and install new ones. Approximately 0.25 cubic yards of excavation and approximately 20 cy backfill would occur within and around the perimeter of the existing structures and along the length of the buried HDPE return pipe. Structural backfill would be placed in 8-inch compacted layers with 6 inches of

granular base over the top. All construction work would be done in dry irrigation ditches that would be blocked off from Fields Creek by a temporary barrier at the head of the ditch. All disturbed surfaces would be restored by seeding using native grass seed mix.

Headgates would be installed at existing corrugated metal pipe culverts in the ditches at the three fish screen project sites (Fields Creek #6, 6A, and 7), as well as at five additional culvert sites on ditches that divert flows from Fields Creek (Fields Creek #2, 3, 4, 8, and 9). The headgates would be installed as retrofits to existing culverts and would not require ground disturbance. The headgates would aid with managing flows into the irrigation ditches.

The Proposed Action fulfills commitments under the 2020 NMFS Columbia River System Biological Opinion and would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the operation and maintenance of the Columbia River System. These actions also support ongoing efforts to mitigate for the 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.¹

_____ for
Dan Gambetta
Environmental Protection Specialist

¹ BPA is aware of the November 12, 2024, decision in *Marin Audubon Society v. Federal Aviation Administration*, No. 23-1067 (D.C. Cir. Nov. 12, 2024). To the extent that a court may conclude that the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA are not judicially enforceable or binding on this agency action, BPA has nonetheless elected to follow those regulations at 40 Code Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) §§ 1500– 1508, in addition to the US Department of Energy's NEPA implementing procedures at 10 C.F.R. Part § 1021, to meet the agency's obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
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: Oregon Fish Screens: Fields Creek Screens and Headgates

Project Site Description

Fields Creek is a perennial stream located approximately 10 miles west of Mt. Vernon, Oregon and is a tributary to the Upper Mainstem John Day River. The landscape is semi-arid and supplies water to agricultural lands through a network of irrigation ditches, supporting hay and livestock operations. Habitat quality is low at the project site due to these practices and seasonal water fluctuations often results in dry conditions throughout a portion of the year.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA determined that the implementation of the proposed project would result in no historic properties affected. BPA consulted with the Oregon State Preservation Office (SHPO), Nez Perce Tribe (NPT), Burns Paiute Tribe (BPT), the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (CTWSRO), and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) on the proposed activities on Field's Creek on July 7th 2022 (OR 2021 045) and on April 25, 2024 (OR 2023 107). Oregon SHPO concurred with BPA's determination in both instances. No other responses have been received.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project's minor excavation and placement of backfill may result in temporary soil disturbance and localized erosion. Temporary Erosion and Sediment Control practices in addition to constructing in the dry would minimize potential for in-stream delivery of sediments or runoff during construction. All disturbed surfaces would be restored by scraping compacted soils and seeding using native grass seed mix and/or live stakes to facilitate soil recovery.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Vegetation would be cleared to access and build on the project areas. Vegetation at Fields Creek 6 consists of one large cottonwood tree and sparse grass. Vegetation at the other sites consists of sparse grass. No known populations of Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed plants in any of the project areas. All disturbed and exposed soils would be revegetated with a native grass mix as prescribed by local ODFW biologist.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status wildlife species or habitats are within the project area. No wildlife habitats would be modified to any degree that might permanently displace resident wildlife. There may be minor temporary displacement of wildlife due to noise and human presence but no long-term disruption of behavior or destruction of wildlife habitat would occur.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed fish species present in Fields Creek include Middle-Columbia steelhead, and bull trout; and state sensitive species include interior redband trout, lamprey, smallmouth bass, and mountain whitefish. All construction work would be done in dry irrigation ditches that would be blocked off from Fields Creek by a temporary barrier at the head of the ditch.

The proposed fish screens and headgates would prevent fish entrapment in irrigation ditches or irrigated fields. Each screen structure has been designed according to criteria in the National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) "Anadromous Salmonid Passage Design Manual (NMFS, West Coast Region, Portland, Oregon, 2022). Endangered Species Act Section 7 coverage for steelhead and bull trout would be provided by NMFS & USFWS Habitat Improvement Program 4 (HIP4) biological opinions (NMFS# WCRO-2020-00102 and USFWS# 01E0FW00-19Y-F-0710). The project was reviewed by Engineering Technical Services for adherence to HIP4 criteria assigned HIP4 project number 2024035.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands present.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impact to groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project aligns with existing land use objectives with no changes to land use proposed as work would occur when the irrigation ditches are not in use. The changes to the screens and headgates would not alter irrigation activities.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor temporary changes to visual quality would occur in the immediate project areas due to fish screen maintenance and equipment occurring in the project area. In the long term, the replacement screens and headgates would be visually consistent with the diversion facilities being replaced.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary emissions from construction equipment are expected but will be short-lived. No long-term air quality impacts would occur.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary intermittent noise would be generated during implementation.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No known hazardous materials are in the project area.

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: ODFW has coordinated with the landowner and water users of the irrigation ditches on which the project screens and headgates are located. Construction would proceed following notification of, and in cooperation with, the affected landowner and irrigation water user.

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

Signed: _____
Dan Gambetta
Environmental Protection Specialist