Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: Yakama Nation Newby Narrows Cut 3 Habitat Restoration Project

Project No.: 2009-003-00

Project Manager: Victoria Bohlen, EWU-4

Location: Okanogan County, Washington

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 provide funding to support implementation of the Yakama Nation Fisheries (YNF) Newby Narrows Cut 3 Habitat Restoration Project along the Twisp River near Twisp, Washington (WA). The project area is within property owned by the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation and would include the installation of large woody debris, side channel excavation, and onsite planting, as well as adaptive management for a previously completed project. The primary goal of the project is to enhance instream habitat complexity, restore floodplain connectivity, and create peripheral and transitional habitats that support the recovery of salmon and steelhead populations in the Lower Twisp River Assessment Unit. The project seeks to enhance adult spawning and juvenile rearing habitat for Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed Upper Columbia River (UCR) spring Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), UCR summer steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), and Columbia River bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*).

To restore hydraulic connectivity, an 880-foot-long side channel would be excavated within the low-elevation forested floodplain, along with a 240-foot-long high-flow secondary connection that would promote floodplain inundation during high-water events. Side channel work would result in about 6,200 cubic yards of material excavated and permanently stockpiled at an on-site upland fill area 0.77-acre in size. The area outside of the 100-year floodplain would be seeded, planted with native trees and shrubs, and stabilized with reinforced silt fencing to support long-term vegetation recovery.

Salvaged and imported large wood and slash would be used to construct robust structures along the side channel alignment and mainstem river. Two engineered large wood structures would be installed - one at the head of a point bar and another buried along the bank - to enhance instream habitat complexity. These structures and wood installed along the new side channel would incorporate 95 imported logs with root wads and 18 timber piles. Wood would be further supplemented with trees salvaged along the side channel alignment. For the two engineered log structures, the top layer of logs would be pinned to improve the longevity of the wood structures at these locations. Within the side channel, a combination of bank-buried and gravity-ballasted structures would be constructed to maintain deep scour pools, depositional areas, and planting

surfaces. Wood would be installed in the dry while sheet pile or bulk bag cofferdams are in place. Prior to reintroducing water to the side channel, turbid water would be consistently pumped to upland or riparian containment areas. In order to avoid significant turbidity during cofferdam removal, a staged rewatering sequence would be completed, in which fine sediment remaining after pumping is flushed out in pulses by removing and then replacing sections of the cofferdam. Cofferdams would be used to isolate work areas that are below the water surface elevation during construction. Fish salvage would be completed by professional biologists using electrofishing, hand dip nets and/or seining within each cofferdam that isolates surface water.

In 2017, Yakama Nation implemented the Newby Narrows Fish Habitat Restoration Project. As part of the adaptive management and maintenance of the 2017 project, a spider excavator would be used to carefully remove wood accumulation that is blocking flow within a side channel. Woody debris removed during this process would be strategically placed downslope of the channel to increase floodplain roughness and reduce the potential for a channel avulsion. The area being corrected through adaptive management is located on the adjacent floodplain from the Newby Narrows Cut 3 Project. Access to the adaptive management site would include walking a spider excavator across the Twisp River near the location of a log structure proposed in the Newby Narrows Cut 3 Project. It is estimated that up to 178 cubic yards of woody debris would be removed and placed on the floodplain.

The timing of construction would be associated with the permitted in-water work period of July 1 - 31. All work would be conducted during daytime hours. Heavy equipment used for this project may include (but is not limited to) excavators, dump trucks, skid steers, vibratory pile driver, water truck, loaders, chainsaws, and miscellaneous hand and power tools. Project construction disturbance at the site would include excavation and temporary access routes for project activities; the maximum disturbance area for clearing and grubbing is 1.5 acre. A total of six stream crossings would be used to transport materials to river right. Disturbed areas would be treated with straw mulch and replanted as part of a comprehensive native vegetation restoration plan.

These actions would support the conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with the National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System and BPA's commitments to the Yakama Nation under the 2020 Columbia River Fish Accord Extension agreement, while also supporting 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 1021.410(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; 89 FR 34074, April 30, 2024), 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]

DAPHNE DAY

Digitally signed by DAPHNE DAY
Date: 2025.06.18 08:34:59 -07'00'

Daphne Day
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

KATEY GRANGE

Digitally signed by KATEY GRANGE
Date: 2025.06.18 08:42:30 -07'00'

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

[1] BPA is aware that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), on February 25, 2025, issued an interim final rule to remove its NEPA implementing regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500–1508. Based on CEQ guidance, and to promote completion of its NEPA review in a timely manner and without delay, in this CX BPA is voluntarily relying on the CEQ regulations, in addition to DOE's own regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021, to meet its obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.

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: Yakama Nation Newby Narrows Cut 3 Habitat Restoration Project

Project Site Description

The project site is located in a rural area at an elevation of approximately 2,150 feet, between River Mile (RM) 10 and 10.5 on the Twisp River, a tributary of the Methow River, approximately 8 miles west of Twisp, Washington. Along with the land directly across the river, the project is located on a parcel owned by Yakama Nation that is used for conservation/habitat restoration. Down and upstream of the project area, other land uses along both banks of the river includes a mix of privately-owned rural residences and agricultural fields, bordered by adjacent national forest land on either side. Within the project reach, large black cottonwood (*Populus balsamifera ssp. trichocarpa*) trees are intermixed with younger age classes of riparian cottonwood, Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), alder (*Alnus spp*.), red-osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), and willow (*Salix spp.*), with some ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*). The stream reach, which is riffle-dominated with predominately cobble surfaces, has been confined due to past floodplain filling, grading, and development, contributing to channel incision and disconnection.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA identified an Area of Potential Effects and reviewed documentation of a prior inventory of the project area for cultural and historic resources (BPA EH Project No. WA 2023 078). BPA determined that the project would result in no historic properties affected and on June 9, 2023, initiated consultation with the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation. On June 9, 2023, DAHP concurred with BPA's determination. No other responses were received from consulting parties. The consultation period ended July 9, 2023.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA would require that work be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by a professional archaeologist.
- Sponsor to have a copy of the post-review discovery protocol on site during project implementation.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Restoration activities would disturb soils on the project site. Best Management Practices (BMPs), including dewatering and staged rewatering methods, have been developed to avoid or minimize temporary fine sediment impacts, increased turbidity downstream, and erosion during construction. All ground disturbance would be stabilized and monitored throughout the length of implementation. All disturbed areas would be stabilized after construction by planting, seeding, and mulching.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA- or state-listed plant species have been recorded in or near the project area. Non-listed plants in the project area would be impacted by project activities, such as ground disturbance and potential trampling from human presence. BMPs would be employed to avoid damage to native trees whenever possible and to salvage native vegetation and replant or use as instream wood after construction. All areas disturbed by construction activity would be replanted or seeded with native species to stabilize topsoil, prevent introduction of invasive species, and improve habitat quality. Overall, this project would have a positive impact on vegetation conditions in the long term.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Local wildlife present within the area could be disturbed by project activities. State-listed species known to occur in the vicinity of the project area include western gray squirrel (*Sciurus griseus*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), and Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*). Suitable nesting habitat for golden eagles is not present in the project area. Disturbance from the proposed actions would be temporary, and the surrounding landscape provides ample habitat and cover for displaced individuals. No habitats would be modified to any degree that might permanently displace resident wildlife, though some may be temporarily displaced by disturbance from equipment noise and human presence. Wildlife would likely reoccupy the site following completion of the proposed activities. The proposed project is expected to improve aquatic and riparian habitat, which would have a beneficial effect for wildlife species in the long term.

In accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), BPA obtained an up-to-date official species list from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on May 8, 2025. The list of threatened or endangered species includes Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), Northern American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*), Mt. Rainier white-tailed ptarmigan (*Lagopus leucura rainierensis*), northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) and yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*). Suitable habitat for the northern spotted owl is potentially present within the project area, which is also located in the vicinity of northern spotted owl designated critical habitat. Gray wolf occurrences are also documented within the vicinity. While known lynx occurrences are documented in the vicinity, the project area does not currently contain the vegetative characteristics that would support high levels of lynx prey species. Audiovisual disturbance to any nearby spotted owls, wolves, or lynx would be temporary in temporal and geographic scope and would not appreciably affect the ability of the species to forage, breed, or shelter in the larger landscape. Impacts would be minimized by following BPA's Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) 4 Biological Opinion requirements and conservation measures. Thus, the project "May effect, not likely to adversely affect" for northern spotted owl and its critical habitat, gray wolf, and Canada lynx. The wolverine and ptarmigan are high-elevation species, and the yellow-billed cuckoo is functionally extinct in the state of Washington, with no known occurrences near the project area. Thus, these three species are unlikely to occur near the project area and the proposed actions are unlikely to have any effect. Two proposed species, the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) and Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee (*Bombus suckleyi*), also have the potential to occur and may be affected by proposed actions through removal of individuals or host plants; however, the project is unlikely to jeopardize the continued existence of the species.

Notes:

- All actions that would have the potential to impact ESA-listed wildlife species would conform to the procedures and conservation measures in BPA's Habitat Improvement Program (HIP4) programmatic biological opinions (HIP PNF 2025 2025066).

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Proposed actions would alter portions of the waterway and would temporarily disrupt aquatic life. ESA-listed Upper Columbia spring Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), Upper Columbia River steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) are present within the project stream reach. No separately listed state fish species have been recorded directly in the project area, but westslope cutthroat (*Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi*) have been recorded in nearby Little Bridge Creek. While project activities are scheduled to take place during the in-water work window, there is the potential that some listed fish would be present in the stream reach during the proposed construction period. Any short-term adverse effects to ESA-listed fish species would be covered under BPA's HIP 4 biological opinions with USFWS and NMFS. The proposed restoration actions would aid in floodplain re-connection, increase local water table, and improve instream complexity for fish habitat. Despite the short-term effects on fish in the area, the long-term effects of the project on fish, floodplains, and water bodies would be positive.

Notes:

- All actions that would have the potential to impact ESA-listed fish species would conform to the procedures and conservation measures in BPA's Habitat Improvement Program (HIP4) programmatic biological opinions (HIP PNF 2025 2025066).

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Approximately 0.014 acre of wetland would be permanently impacted during dredging activities for the side channel creation. Newly created wetlands would total 0.05 acre. Conservation measures would be employed to minimize impacts to other wetland areas during construction. The project would be covered for Clean Water Act compliance under Nationwide 27 (Aquatic Habitat Restoration, Enhancement, and Establishment Activities) and Nationwide 33 (Temporary Construction, Access, and Dewatering) programmatic permits. Overall, the amount of wetland would increase in the project area, and wetland quality would improve due to the restoration of natural flow patterns.

Notes:

- All Clean Water Act permits would be in place prior to work initiation.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The placement of the log structure and logs with roots in the channels may result in minor impacts to groundwater by encouraging greater amounts of water onto the floodplain during high flows. The long-term increase in floodplain access would benefit groundwater recharge and function.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No long-term change in land use would occur. No specially-designated areas are present.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would result in temporary and permanent changes to the landscape. During implementation, impacts from material staging, excavation equipment, vegetation disturbances, and human presence would be minor and short-term. Upon project completion, the new wood structures would be visually consistent with adjacent vegetation and would not be located in a visually sensitive area. Overall, the project would improve visual quality as the area would return to a more natural condition.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minor increases in local air pollution during project activities due to exhaust from machinery and equipment. BMPs would be used to limit the amount of dust created by equipment. Conditions would be expected to return to normal immediately after the project is completed. There would be no long-term effects to air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minor increases in noise generated by machinery and equipment used during project activities. The noise would be of short duration and during daylight hours only. This noise would be temporary and cause no long-term impacts.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During project implementation, all personnel would use BMPs to ensure human health and safety; solely licensed and trained professionals would operate all machinery. Following implementation, project stability analyses show there is a low likelihood that instream structures would affect hydraulics, sediment transportation, and/or wood transport to the degree to which nearby public safety would be at risk.

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 project would occur on land owned by Yakama Nation. No coordination or outreach 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: DAPHNE DAY Digitally signed by DAPHNE DAY Date: 2025.06.18 08:34:33 -07'00'

Daphne Day
Environmental Protection Specialist