

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Geotechnical Investigation at Prosser Hatchery

**Project Manager:** Andrew Traylor, EWU-4

**Location:** Benton County, WA

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B3.1 Site characterization and environmental monitoring

**Description of the Proposed Action:** BPA is in the planning stage for equipment replacement of acclimation facilities for fall Chinook smolts at the existing Prosser Hatchery, located in Prosser, WA. The hatchery facility is located on federally-owned land managed by the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) and is operated under license by the Yakama Nation. BPA proposes to conduct a geotechnical investigation at the site to characterize subsurface conditions for the proposed equipment replacement, including replacement of four existing rectangular raceways with an acclimation building with slab foundation and roof covering that would contain a partial water reuse system and circular raceways. Information provided by the investigation would be vital to proper facility placement, safe construction, and long-term site reliability. This action would support BPA's commitments to the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission under the 2020 Columbia River Fish Accord Extension agreement, while also supporting 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.).

Subsurface conditions in the location of the equipment replacement would be explored by test pit excavations. Four geotechnical test pits would be excavated using a backhoe or mini excavator near the corners of the proposed acclimation building. The test pits would measure approximately 3-foot-wide by 12-foot-long and extend to maximum depths of 8 feet, or to refusal on bedrock. Anticipated materials include borrow or back dirt, fines, cobbles, and large boulders associated with previous fill of the site from construction of the adjacent Chandler Canal and diversion. Excavated soils would be temporarily stored beside the test pits. After completion, the test pits would be immediately backfilled; the area graded to original contours. Access to the site would be via existing, maintained roads.

**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/ Carolyn A. Sharp

Carolyn A. Sharp  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel                      May 26, 2022

Sarah T. Biegel                      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:** Geotechnical Investigation at Prosser Hatchery

## **Project Site Description**

The facility occupies a floodplain terrace between the Yakima River to the south and USBR's Chandler Canal to the north. The hatchery site property is approximately 10 acres at an elevation of 625 feet above sea level. Existing facilities at the hatchery include a visitor center; spawning, incubation, and acclimation facilities; and earthen rearing ponds. The Prosser Hatchery typically operates year round. The facility has been in operation since 1997.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No, with Conditions

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation on April 22, 2022, with Washington Department of Historic Preservation (DAHP), Yakama Nation, the Nez Perce Tribe, and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation. In this initiation and determination, BPA concluded that the project would result in a determination of no adverse effect to historic properties; however, the monitoring of the geotechnical test pits by an archaeologist was recommended. On April 22, BPA received a response from DAHP concurring with the determination. On April 22, BPA also received comments from the Yakama Nation, expressing concerns about the possible effects on an undocumented Traditional Cultural Property (TCP) in the vicinity and the potential for effects to the traditional fishery. In further consultation with the Yakama Nation Cultural Resources Program, it was determined that monitoring of the geotechnical test pits could proceed and the request for a study of the TCP would be addressed in ongoing consultation associated with the acclimation improvements once project designs have progressed and the results of the monitoring effort could be considered. No additional responses were received from the other consulting parties.

Notes:

- A cultural resources monitor would be present to observe ground-disturbing activities and an Inadvertent Discovery Plan would be on site during implementation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Under supervision of a geotechnical engineer or geologist, the equipment operators would dig four test pits within what is currently a compacted gravel surface. Excavated material would be placed directly back in the trenches after study is completed. Trenching, sampling, and observations would be completed within one day.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The geotechnical pits would be dug within graveled areas that are part of the existing hatchery facility operations. Vegetation is not present and would not be disturbed.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions would have no effect to wildlife. Activities associated with the geotechnical investigation would be consistent equipment use and human activity associated with daily operations of the fish hatchery. There are no known occurrences of ESA-listed or special-status wildlife species in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Although work sites are within approximately 430-440 feet of the Yakima River, all activities would occur within previously developed areas. No riparian vegetation would be removed and river/channel banks would not be altered. No in-river/channel work would occur.

#### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not take place within or around wetlands, and therefore no potential to affect wetlands.

#### **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or use of groundwater is proposed.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No specially-designated areas are located within the project area; no land use changes are proposed; nor would the proposed project activities change the current land use at this site.

#### **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no adverse effects to the visual quality of the environment as a result of this action.

#### **10. Air Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Only short-term and localized effects on air quality would be expected from equipment exhaust and potential dust production. These would not rise to a noteworthy degree above normal maintenance activities.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Heavy equipment used to dig the trenches would produce noise above normal daily operating levels for the immediate vicinity. Since this would persist for less than one day, there would be no potential for significant noise effects.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed project actions do not adversely impact human health and safety. Operational activities would follow applicable health and safety standards.

### 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 Yakama Nation and BPA signed an access license with USBR addressing acclimation-related design and construction upgrades at Prosser Hatchery. BPA coordinated with USBR and confirmed activities are consistent with existing agreements.

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

Signed: /s/ Carolyn A. Sharp May 26, 2022  
Carolyn A. Sharp, ECF-4 Date  
Environmental Protection Specialist