

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Crystal Springs Hatchery Trial

Project Manager: Kara Campell – TERR-3

Location: Bingham County, ID

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.24 Property transfers

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (Bonneville) proposes to grant access to Bonneville-owned property in Bingham County, Idaho to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The access would permit USFWS to assist the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe (SBT) with construction of two new earthen ponds (200' x 25' x 4' deep) at the Crystal Springs Hatchery (Bonneville-owned property). The ponds would be constructed using a D1 Dozer and 315 Excavator. A work window has been identified as September 22-26, 2024 to meet endangered Chinook salmon transfer in October of 2024. Bonneville's action would be limited solely to granting access to Bonneville-owned property.

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), BONNEVILLE 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, Bonneville finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

Ted Gresh
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Sarah Biegel
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.

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Project Site Description

The Bonneville-owned property is located in Bingham County, 2.9 miles southeast of the town of Springfield in southern Idaho. The site is approximately 9 acres and adjacent to McTucker Creek. The property is bordered by private land to the east and Bureau of Reclamation property to the south. A former commercial trout hatchery is onsite and consists of a small building, six artesian wells in which naturally pressurized-groundwater comes to the surface, some deteriorated outdoor concrete raceways, and a series of man-made excavated ponds fed by water discharged from the wells. The site has been previously disturbed by agricultural activities and by the construction and operation of the former trout hatchery. Surrounding land use includes former and actively cultivated agricultural land to the north, east, and west, and mixed shrubland, grasslands, and riparian areas to the south.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: USFWS was the lead Federal agency for the Section 106 consultation. The USFWS archaeologist reviewed the proposed action and determined that there would be no effect on historic and cultural resources. USFWS consulted with SBT and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in a letter dated, September 5, 2024. The Idaho SHPO concurred with the determination in a letter dated, September 6, 2024.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Excavation on Bonneville-owned property would be required to construct earthen ponds. Ground disturbance on Bonneville-owned property would be limited to the areas where construction of the ponds would occur. The Ponds would be 200-feet long, 25-feet wide, and 4-feet deep so the effects would be localized and cause no large-scale changes to the geology of the region.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed plant species within the Bonneville-owned property (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) tool). Granting the access for construction of earthen ponds would have no effect on ESA-listed plant species.

There would be minimal effects on non-listed vegetation from the small amount of construction/excavation necessary to construct the ponds.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The western yellow-billed cuckoo is the only wildlife species protected under the ESA known to occur in the vicinity of the Bonneville-owned property. Yellow-billed cuckoo is associated with riparian woodlands located along the Snake River corridor from American Falls Reservoir to the town of Blackfoot. The proposed hatchery is approximately 1 mile from the closest designated habitat and 0.6 mile from the nearest sighting record (IDFG 2015d). The Bonneville property does not contain typical habitat for this species, so no impacts are expected.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are several man-made excavated ponds on the Bonneville-owned property that collect flow from artesian wells and some subsurface flow. They are connected by short channels extending from north to south. An existing 36-inch culvert conveys water from the ponds beneath a road and into McTucker Creek, and a tributary to American Falls Reservoir in the Snake River basin. This portion of the Snake River Basin is above the one of anadromy, so no ESA-listed salmon or steelhead species are present. Shoshone-Bannock Tribal biologists used electrofishing to test for fish presence in the former rearing ponds on the hatchery site property. No fish of any species were collected within the property boundary so there would be no effects to fish.

The portion of the Bonneville property where earthen ponds would be constructed is entirely in upland areas and does not include the springs or its floodplain, so work on Bonneville-owned property would not impact the surface water.

Because the USFWS proposal at the Crystal Springs site would rear less than 20,000 pounds of fish annually, a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for the facility is not required.

Once in operation, water for the earthen ponds would be drawn from the existing onsite well at a maximum rate of 8cfs, which is well below the 25cfs water right associated with the Bonneville-owned property. Effluent from the new earthen ponds would be directed to the man-made ponds for tertiary treatment/settling. Accumulated solids in the earthen ponds would be removed from the new earthen ponds once emptied. Dredging of Ponds 1-5 acting as Full-Flow Settling ponds would occur as needed per Idaho Waste Water Management for Aquaculture Operations: <https://www.uidaho.edu/-/media/uidaho-responsive/files/extension/county/twin-falls/aquaculture/aquaculture-waste-management-guidelines.pdf?rev=8fbcf1faf277442e9b9c2f43b00885d2>.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Based on a previous wetland delineation completed during project planning for the Crystal Springs Hatchery Project, no wetlands were identified in the area where construction activities would occur; therefore, there would be no effect on wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction of the earthen ponds would not affect groundwater and aquifers. No new wells or groundwater use are proposed. Water for the ponds would be provided by an existing pump under an existing water right for the property (025 cfs). All water used for the ponds would be returned to the man-made ponds so withdrawals would be considered non-consumptive and would have no effect on groundwater.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Allowing USFWS access would not represent a change in land use of the Bonneville-owned property. The property's last use was as a fish hatchery and the planned activities are consistent with that former land use.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be changes to the visual quality of the Bonneville-owned property, but these changes would be minor.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction taking place on Bonneville-owned property would involve the use of heavy machinery and produce exhaust. These effects would be temporary, localized to the area, and cause no long-term generation of emissions.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction taking place on Bonneville-owned property would involve the use of heavy machinery and produce noise. These effects would be temporary, localized to the area, and cause no long-term changes to the noise levels of the area.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All workers would use best practices to ensure human health and safety.

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 property is wholly on Bonneville fee-owned property.

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

Signed:

Ted Gresh
Environmental Protection Specialist