

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** YTAHP Wenas Creek at McKinney Riparian Enhancement Project

**Project No.:** 2007-398-00

**Project Manager:** Michelle O'Malley, EWU-4

**Location:** Yakima 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 fund the North Yakima Conservation District (NYCD) of the Yakima Tributary Access and Habitat Program (YTAHP) work group to implement the Wenas Creek at McKinney riparian enhancement project on private land near Naches, Washington. Wenas Creek is utilized by Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed steelhead, Chinook and coho salmon, and a suite of resident fishes. ESA-listed bull trout are present in the Yakima River and may utilize the lower reaches of Wenas Creek for overwintering habitat.

NYCD would install approximately 200 potted trees, shrubs, and live stakes in sections of a 0.8 acre riparian area along Wenas Creek where fire burned much of the existing vegetation. Newly planted vegetation would supplement the existing vegetation to help create species diversity, shade, and thermal refuge for native salmonids, as well as prevent excessive bank erosion. The planting area would be prepared with mechanical weed control methods, as well as the application of fabric mulch to control future weed growth around newly planted trees and shrubs.

In addition to the plantings, NYCD would install approximately 700 feet of livestock exclusion fence using wooden posts to create a buffer along the riparian area, and a National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) compliant fish-screen on an existing irrigation pump intake in Wenas creek to prevent fish entrainment in the irrigation canal. The fish screen would be placed by hand on the pump intake; there would be no disturbance to the creek bed or bank other than moving rocks by hand to ensure the screen frame sits securely on the creek bottom. All access and staging areas for the project activities would occur along existing roads. NYCD would implement the activities in the fall/winter of 2021. Following the initial planting efforts, the area may be revisited in subsequent years to maintain plantings which may include herbicide treatments, manual and mechanical weed treatments, and additional plantings.

Funding the proposed activities would support conservation of ESA-listed species consider in the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Columbia River System Biological Opinions, while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the development and operation of the Federal Columbia River Power System on fish and wildlife in

the 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/ Brenda Aguirre

Brenda Aguirre  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange                      November 18, 2021  
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:** YTAHP Wenas Creek at McKinney Riparian Enhancement Project

## **Project Site Description**

The project site is located on Wenas Creek at River (RM) 14 within the Wenas Creek Watershed of the Upper Yakima River Subbasin. Wenas Creek is a tributary to the Yakima River at RM 122. The legal description of the project site is T15N, R17E, Sec 11. The surrounding area is used for agricultural crop production and grazing.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation on July 6, 2021. DAHP provided concurrence with the Area of Potential Effects (APE) on July 7, 2021. BPA sent a determination of no effect to historic properties to consulting parties on October 21, 2021. DAHP concurred on October 21, 2021, and the Yakama Nation requested a revised APE map and report on October 25, 2021. BPA sent a revised map and report to consulting parties on November 5, 2021. DAHP concurred with the revisions on November 8, 2021 and the Yakama Nation recommended an Inadvertent Discovery Plan be in place for the project on November 9, 2021.

Notes:

- BPA would provide the project sponsor with an Inadvertent Discovery Plan.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some ground disturbance during planting and fence construction would occur where plants and fence posts were placed. Any impacts to soils as a result of the project would be short term. In the long term, there would be beneficial effects from stabilized banks due the improved vegetative conditions.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area has the potential to contain habitat for ESA-listed Whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*) and Umtanum Desert buckwheat (*Eriogonum codium*). The project would have no effect on Federally-listed plant species due to lack of habitat and occurrence in the project area. The project is designed to minimize impacts to native vegetation. Riparian vegetative communities would be restored through planting native species in areas burned by fire. The project would have short-term effects on vegetation from planting and fencing actions due to human trampling of some vegetation while working at and accessing work

sites, but in the long term, there would be beneficial effects from restored or improved vegetative conditions.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area has the potential to contain habitat for ESA-listed Oregon spotted frog (*Rana pretiosa*), yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*), marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*), and Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), but based on habitat characteristics and species distribution, the project would have no effect on these ESA-listed species. Planting additional trees and shrubs within the riparian area and fencing around the area would not involve removing existing vegetation. Some disturbance to non-listed or sensitive wildlife during project activities may occur due to human presence. Any impacts would be short term. Improved habitat conditions would result in long-term positive impacts, including increased riparian plant density and diversity, and habitat structure.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed Middle Columbia River steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) are present in Wenas Creek. ESA-listed bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) are present in the Yakima River and may utilize the lower reaches of Wenas Creek for overwintering habitat. Installation of the fish screen would be placed by hand on the pump intake hose and the riparian vegetation would be planted and fencing would occur on the stream margins. Best management practices would also be utilized during project activities. Therefore the proposed project activities would not impact ESA-listed or special-status species. The screening, fencing and planting is also not expected to impact waterbodies or floodplains.

#### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: None present in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project activities do not propose new wells or use of groundwater.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project activities do not propose changes to land use; designated farmlands would not be taken out of production.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project activities do not propose changes to visual quality; the riparian plantings and fencing would be visually consistent with agricultural lands and fencing adjacent to riparian areas. The project area is not within a visually sensitive area.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would generate small amounts of dust and vehicle emissions during planting, fencing and placement of the fish screen.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be short-term implementation noise during daylight hours. This noise would not be noticeably different than the surrounding agricultural production noise.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project sponsor is required to use best management practices to protect worker health and safety. Any activities involving hazardous materials (treated wood posts) would be disposed of at a designated hazardous waste facility.

### **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: Implementation of project activities would not cause impacts to surrounding landowners. The project sponsor, NYCD, has coordinated with the underlying landowner and has permission to conduct project activities.

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

Signed: /s/ Brenda Aguirre November 18, 2021  
Brenda Aguirre, ECF-4 Date  
Environmental Protection Specialist