

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Raistakka Fish Enhancement Project – Geotechnical Investigation

**Project No.:** 2010-073-00

**Project Manager:** Jason Karnezis, EWL – 4

**Location:** Wahkiakum 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 proposes to fund the Columbia Land Trust (CLT) to conduct geotechnical investigations at the Raistakka property, located on the Grays River at river mile (RM) 1 in Wahkiakum County, Washington. The geotechnical investigation would characterize subsurface conditions for the area where a setback levee is proposed. Information provided by the investigation would be vital to proper levee placement, safe construction, and long-term site reliability.

The geotechnical investigation would include the excavation of borings and test pits. Four mud-rotary borings would be drilled at the project site in the footprint of the planned levee. The borings would be advanced to depths of 60-feet to 80-feet below the existing site grades with a track-mounted drill rig using open-hole, mud-rotary drilling techniques. Borings would be immediately backfilled upon completion. Test pits would be advanced in the footprint of the new levee to characterize near-surface subsurface soil conditions. Three to six test pits are estimated to be excavated measuring 3 feet wide, 6 feet long, and have depths of 10-feet to 15-feet depending on the occurrence of sloughing while the excavation is advanced. The test pits would be completed using a tracked excavator supplied and operated by the drilling contractor. Following completion of excavation and sample collection, the test pits would be backfilled using spoils.

Three temporary crossings would be installed across non-tidal channels to facilitate access to the marsh surface. Block nets would be installed on each side of the crossing location about 20 feet from where work would occur. The area between the block nets would be defished using a seine net. Culverts would be placed in the channel and large, clean cobble placed over and around the culverts using a dump truck and excavator. Fabric would be placed on the bed and banks of the channel to allow for thorough cleanup of temporarily placed rock. Access to the site would be via existing, maintained roads.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp). These proposed activities also support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Columbia River System BiOp (2020 FWS CRS BiOp), while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System (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.

Shawn Skinner  
Environmental Protection Specialist

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:** Raistakka Fish Enhancement Project – Geotechnical Investigation

## **Project Site Description**

The project site would occur on the Columbia Land Trust (CLT)-owned Raistakka property; an approximately 23-acre property located within the Grays River's historical floodplain and disconnected from tidal influence by dikes. The property contains former floodplain habitat typically associated with the tidal reach of the Grays River as well as some hydrologically intact scrub-shrub and forested wetland.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation on March 15, 2024, with the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation, the Chinook Indian Tribe, the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, and the Shoalwater Bay Tribe. In this initiation the monitoring of the geotechnical test pits by a professional archaeologist was recommended. BPA received a response from DAHP (February 20, 2024) and the Chinook Indian Tribe (February 28, 2024) concurring with the proposed work and field inventory methods. No additional responses were received from the other consulting parties.

Notes:

- A professional archaeologist would complete an intensive survey of the area proposed for geotechnical investigation prior to work and be onsite to monitor geotechnical activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Drilling the geotechnical bores would require ground disturbance. Drilling would displace the soil in and around the bore. The soil removed during excavation would be retained nearby and used to refill the holes following completion of site characterization to restore the area to the current conditions. This ground disturbance would be highly localized and cause no significant impacts on geology and soils in the overall project area. Other ground disturbance, such as from vehicles and human presence, would be shallow and limited to light disturbance of the topmost layers of soil and cause no significant impacts to the geology and soils in the overall project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no known Federal/state special-status plant species in the project area. Disturbance (removal and crushing) of plants in the project area would largely occur to non-native plants and the wider effects on vegetation in the project area would be negligible.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no known federal/state special status wildlife species in the project area. Minor, short-term disturbance would occur to wildlife species in the area from noise associated with the geotechnical investigation. The goal of the work is to improve riparian and floodplain habitat for the benefit of terrestrial and aquatic species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed fish in proximity to the project area include coho, chum, Chinook, bull trout, and steelhead. The project was reviewed and consulted on under the HIP Biological Opinion under Section 7 of the ESA. The project sponsor would adhere to all applicable site-specific conservation measures identified in the HIP consultation and approval, including turbidity monitoring requirements and in-water work timing.

### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not be changing the hydrology within the project area. There are mapped wetlands surrounding the project area (USFWS National Wetlands Inventory), but no geotechnical bores would be drilled in these wetlands. There would therefore be no effects on wetlands.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or groundwater use are proposed. Geotechnical bores would expose some groundwater in order to measure the local water table in the project area. This exposure would be limited duration and the bores would be refilled following completion of the geotechnical site characterization. There would be no long-term effects to local groundwater

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not change the capability of the land to be used as it was prior to project actions. There would be no land use changes, and no impact to specially-designated areas.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no long term adverse effects to the visual quality of the environment as all holes would be refilled after the geotechnical sampling.

## 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 little potential for significant noise effects.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All applicable safety regulations would be followed during work activities.

### 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 entire project area is owned and managed by CLT. The project would not occur on any land owned by additional landowners.

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

Signed:

Shawn Skinner  
Environmental Protection Specialist