

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Salmon River Basin Fish Screen Construction/Replacement and Screen Shop Improvements 2025

**Project No.:** 2007-399-00

**Project Manager:** Eric Leitzinger – EWM - 4

**Location:** Custer and Lemhi counties, Idaho

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B1.3 Routine maintenance, B1.20 Protection of cultural resources, fish and wildlife habitat

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) to construct and replace four fish screens and install one new fish screen on private, state, and federal land in the Salmon River Basin in Lemhi and Custer counties. In addition, BPA proposes to fund IDFG to make improvements to the septic system at their facility where fish screens are designed and fabricated (Screen Shop) in Salmon, Idaho (Lemhi County). The proposed actions would improve fish passage at irrigation diversions for Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), steelhead (*O. mykiss*), bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), Snake River sockeye salmon (*O. nerka*), and resident fish; protect fish from entrapment in irrigation ditches and fields; and ensure proper functionality of the fish screens for future years.

The four replacement sites currently support aging fish screens that would be replaced with a new design. The new screen site has an existing irrigation diversion structure, but no fish screen. Fish screen locations are outlined in the table below.

Screen ID	Water body	County	Land Ownership	Latitude/Longitude
L-08	Lemhi River	Lemhi	Private	45.120256, -113.779471
L-33	Lemhi River	Lemhi	Private	44.920739, -113.634591
S-02	Salmon River	Lemhi	State	45.433011, -113.991907
P-08	Pahsimeroi River	Custer	State & Private	44.618941, -113.984337
LBTC-04 (new)	Big Timber Creek	Lemhi	Private	44.644524, -113.380548

All fish screens have been designed according to criteria in the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) “Anadromous Salmonid Passage Facility Design Manual” (last updated February 2023) and would be installed according to all relevant criteria in BPA’s Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) biological opinions. Construction activity for each screen installation and removal would generally disturb less than 0.5 acres of land in total, although the area where work would be completed at each site may be across several acres. For replacement screens, construction would require removal and back fill of the existing fish screen including the associated ditch

alignments and sediment basin, clearing and grubbing the new screen site with a track hoe, excavating the site for the screen structure, new ditch alignments and a sediment basin, preparing the subgrade, installing and backfilling a new concrete or steel modular rotary-drum fish screen and control structure in the ditch, and trenching to install bypass pipeline to connect the structure to existing diversion infrastructure and the river. Similar actions would be undertaken for the installation of the new screen. In addition, the new screen would require installation of a headgate structure at the existing point of diversion. Headgate installation would follow Idaho Department of Water Resources requirements and require excavation, preparing the subgrade, and installing a lockable and controllable head gate structure with measuring device and trash rack.

Construction would occur behind closed diversions in the dry season, so instream work is not required at screen sites except for one (P-08). The point of diversion at P-08 would be moved upstream and a new headgate would be installed. Since the point of diversion is moving at this site, the work area would be isolated using a coffer dam and a salvage operation would be conducted to remove any fish present before dewatering the area. In addition, one existing screen site (L-33) would require replacement of a 10-inch-diameter bypass pipeline under nearby Highway 28. Specialized equipment, such as a directional drill, would be needed to bore under the highway (around 70 feet in length) to install this pipeline.

All existing fish screen sites and the new proposed fish screen site have existing access roads. Any existing fencing that would need to be moved for screen installation would be replaced in the same location or nearby. All sites would be restored by hydro-seeding following final grading.

The current septic system at the IDFG Screen Shop facility is past its useful life and failing. A system of older septic lines that run throughout the facility property would be decommissioned and a new line would be installed. A backhoe, trencher, or similar equipment would be used to remove old lines and install new lines. Existing underground septic tanks and associated pumping components would be replaced in their same locations. Two existing drainfields (approximately 25 feet by 75 feet each) would be decommissioned and remediated. A new drainfield (approximately 50 feet by 120 feet) would be installed adjacent to an existing drainfield, at the northeast corner of the IDFG property. Additionally, because the drainfield would be moved, a section of irrigation ditch that goes through the property would need to be piped to separate it from the septic system. All septic system components would be installed in accordance with Idaho Department of Environmental Quality requirements.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp) and the 2020 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Columbia River System BiOp (2020 FWS CRS BiOp). These actions also support BPA's commitments to the State of Idaho in the Columbia River Fish Accord, as amended, 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.<sup>1</sup>

Jacquelyn Schei  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

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<sup>1</sup> 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:** Salmon River Basin Fish Screen Construction/Replacement and Screen Shop Improvements 2025

## Project Site Description

Sites are located on existing irrigation ditches in conjunction with irrigation water diversion infrastructure in previously-disturbed riparian, agricultural, or grazing areas along the Pahsimeroi River (southeast of Ellis, Idaho), Lemhi River (southeast of Salmon, Idaho), Big Timber Creek (a tributary of the Lemhi River and southeast of Salmon, Idaho), and on the mainstem Salmon River (north of Salmon, Idaho). Sites are in broad riparian floodplains within a sagebrush steppe ecosystem, and at locations where much of the floodplain and surrounding productive sagebrush steppe lands have been converted to agricultural and grazing uses supported by irrigation diversions from the rivers. The footprint of construction activity for each screen action is occupied by low-growing grasses, forbs, and shrubs.

The IDFG Screen Shop is located in Salmon, Idaho, along Highway 93 in an industrial and agricultural area. The facility was built in 1993, with funding from BPA. Buildings are on a gravel lot approximately 6 acres in size. The septic improvements would take place within the facility footprint.

## Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

### 1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On March 4, 2025, BPA sent a letter of correspondence to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) describing the proposed septic improvements at the Screen Shop and made a determination of no historic properties affected (BPA Cultural Resources Project No.: ID 2025 014). On March 5, 2025, the Idaho SHPO provided concurrence with BPA's finding. On April 4, 2025, the 30-day response period expired. No comments were received from the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation.

For the five screen sites, BPA made a determination of no adverse effect on historic properties on April 23, 2025 (BPA Cultural Resources Project No.: ID 2025 009), and sent a letter of correspondence and cultural resource survey reports to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation and the Idaho SHPO. On May 7, 2025, the Idaho SHPO provided concurrence with BPA's determination. On May 24, 2025, the 30-day response period expired. No comments were received from the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation.

### 2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Soils would be displaced, compacted, and mixed by the actions of construction equipment. Impacts at existing screen sites and the IDFG Screen Shop would occur on sites that have been previously disturbed by heavy construction equipment when the original fish screens and the IDFG facility were constructed. All screen sites are near agricultural and grazing activities and while it may be possible that previously-unaltered

soils are impacted at some screen sites, it would be minor. Construction at screen sites would disturb less than 0.5 acre and less than one acre at the Screen Shop. Impacts from construction actions would be minimized by the application of best management practices to control erosion and prevent spills.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed, or state special-status plant species are present in project locations. Fish screens would be in, or near, riparian areas, but the sites would be in locations previously disturbed by agricultural and grazing activities. There would be minor impacts to vegetation from excavation and trampling by vehicles and crews. No native shrub or woodland riparian plant communities would be impacted and disturbed soils would be planted with a native seed mix after construction. There is no native vegetation at the Screen Shop site and this property has been previously disturbed, so there would be no impacts. Minimizing workspace and seeding would provide for long-term recovery of the sites and adjacent riparian vegetation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction would commence in late summer or fall; thus, no disturbance of nesting birds would occur. There would be some home range destruction and displacement of small terrestrial wildlife within the construction footprints of the fish screens, but this loss would be a few hundred square feet at most and would be of minimal effect to animal populations in the project areas. Larger wildlife using riparian habitats nearby may be disturbed and temporarily displaced by noise and human presence during the construction actions. These larger species would likely not be displaced from their home ranges, though they may temporarily relocate as long as active construction is occurring.

No ESA-listed or "special-status" wildlife species are present in locations close enough to these construction sites to be disturbed. The USFWS Information for Planning and Conservation (IPaC) tools lists the Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*), and the yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), all ESA-listed Threatened, as having the potential to be in one or more of the project areas. In addition, IPaC lists the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*), ESA-proposed Threatened, and Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee (*Bombus suckleyi*), ESA-proposed Endangered, as having the potential to be present in one or more of the project areas. There are no critical habitats for ESA-listed or proposed species in any of the project areas and no confirmed presence of any of the species in the project areas. Due to current agricultural/grazing land use practices, nearby residences, and the proximity of the Screen Shop to Highway 93 and in the town of Salmon, it is unlikely these species would be present in the project areas and the actions would have no effect to ESA-listed or proposed wildlife species.

Bald eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) and golden eagles (*Aquila chrysaetos*) are present in Lemhi and Custer counties year-round. There is no confirmed presence of nests or previously used nest sites for either species in the project areas. Screen sites are typically in areas without much tree coverage because they are on agricultural fields. The Screen Shop is free of any trees and is in a more industrial area of town. None of the sites contain preferred habitats for eagles and it is expected none would be encountered during project activities. Therefore, the proposed actions would have no impacts to bald and golden eagles. However, if a nest is observed in any project area, IDFG would employ protection measures (e.g., timing, distance) as necessary to ensure eagles would not be taken or otherwise harmed as a result of the proposed actions.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Fish screen construction would be in and along irrigation ditches near the Lemhi, Pahsimeroi, and Salmon rivers and Big Timber Creek where ESA-listed spring Chinook, steelhead, and bull trout are present. Work would typically be done outside of flowing water, usually outside of the irrigation season or with the ditch flows turned off, and have no impact to ESA-listed fish. The exception would be the relocation of the point of diversion at P-08. For this proposed action, the work area would be isolated using a coffer dam and a salvage operation would be conducted to remove any fish present before dewatering the area and proceeding with construction. Conservation measures from BPA's HIP would be applied to minimize impacts. Work to install a new bypass pipe for L-33 and work at the Screen Shop would be in upland areas and have no impact to fish, water bodies, or floodplains.

## 6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present at the project sites. All sites have been previously disturbed and are now used for industrial or agricultural purposes. There would be no effect to wetlands from the proposed actions.

## 7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Fish screens and the Screen Shop septic system have no potential to impact groundwater or aquifers. They do not withdraw water from either surface or groundwater sources. The operation of construction equipment activities may have short-term potential to impact water quality slightly from possible fuel or other fluid drips or spills, but conservation measures from BPA's HIP ESA consultation would be applied that would prevent or minimize this potential. The existing drain field would be decommissioned and the new septic and drainfield would be installed in accordance with Idaho Department of Environmental Quality standards and requirements to prevent groundwater contamination.

## 8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change to land use. All fish screens would be constructed on state and/or private agricultural lands and are intended to support continued agricultural activities by protecting ESA-listed fish during delivery of irrigation water. The Screen Shop site would continue to be occupied and used by IDFG as a facility for building and repairing fish passage screens.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Replacement fish screens would not be changing the visual quality at existing fish screen sites as the equipment would essentially be the same as what is there now. The same applies for the proposed septic improvements at the Screen Shop. Most of this work would be underground and not visible after construction. The new fish screen would be added to an existing irrigation ditch, so there would be new equipment that could be seen at the site. Given that all occur in agricultural areas, there would be no long-term impacts to visual quality. There would be short-term scenery impacts from the presence of construction equipment and vegetation removal.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Driving of trucks and operation of construction equipment would produce emissions, but the amount would be minimal and short-term, and consistent with that produced by local agricultural activities or the nearby highway in the case of the Screen Shop and bypass pipe replacement at L-33.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Noise sources would be from trucks and construction equipment. Noise would be consistent with that produced by local agricultural activities and vehicles on the nearby highway and would be short-term. These impacts would occur during daylight hours during the summer and fall months.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed screen installation work is not considered hazardous nor does it result in any health or safety risks to the general public. No long-term public safety hazards would be created. Routine, short-term, safety hazards would be expected from the incremental addition of truck traffic on local roads, the operation of construction equipment, and the use of hand tools. Drilling under Highway 28 to replace the bypass pipe for L-33 would have similar, short-term safety concerns associated with construction. Any work affecting the highway would be completed in coordination with the Idaho Transportation Department and following their requirements. There is the potential for the Screen Shop septic improvements to introduce health hazards if there were a spill or break in a line. Improvements would be completed in accordance with Idaho Department of Environmental Quality requirements and using appropriate protective equipment in order to protect human health and safety, reduce the chances of a spill, and minimize any impacts from a spill. In the long-term, the septic improvements would support system resilience and continued safety of the users of the 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: IDFG has coordinated with the state and private landowners to develop plans and identify specific locations where proposed actions will be implemented. Construction schedules and mobilization of heavy equipment would be coordinated with the involved parties at each site.

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

Signed:

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