

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Wind River Watershed Steelhead Monitoring Project

Project No.: 1998-019-00

Project Manager: Jamie Cleveland

Location: Skamania County, WA

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: BPA proposes to fund the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the U.S. Geological Survey to conduct long-term monitoring activities for the purpose of collecting status and trend information for ESA Threatened Lower Columbia Steelhead. The specific activities necessary to achieve this purpose would be:

Operate adult trap at Shepherd Falls fish ladder and conduct adult tagging

Conduct snorkel and spawning ground surveys

Conduct juvenile migrant trapping via operation of four rotary screw traps located throughout the Wind Basin and juvenile tagging

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/ Ted Gresh

Ted Gresh

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: September 30, 2019

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 Project would occur within or along the Wind River in Skamania County, WA. The Wind River watershed does not have a hatchery program and has limited hydrosystem impacts so it serves as a reference population for understanding hydrosystem and hatchery impacts on steelhead throughout the Columbia River Basin.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> This project does not involve ground disturbance of any kind. When needed, additional PIT tag arrays would be installed at existing sites that have been previously disturbed. If any new ground disturbance is proposed outside of disturbed areas, a cultural resource consultation would be initiated.</p>		
2. Geology and Soils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> There is no ground disturbance associated with these actions. Therefore, there is no potential to affect geology and soils.</p>		
3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The proposed action does not include any vegetation management, ground disturbance, or actions that would significantly impact vegetation in work areas. Therefore, there is no potential to affect plant communities.</p>		
4. Wildlife (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The proposed actions would take place entirely within the Wind River. There would be no ground disturbance and actions would only affect isolated, existing infrastructure. Therefore, there is no potential to affect wildlife or wildlife habitat.</p>		
5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Environmental considerations include those typical for stream habitat restoration projects where ESA-listed fish are present. All activities conducted under this project have been reviewed by NMFS and would operate under the requirements stipulated in the Section 4(d) Rule for Pacific Salmon and Steelhead for research activities, and as such, would have no potential to affect water bodies, floodplains, or fish.</p>		

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: The proposed actions could take place within or around wetlands; however, the actions would not have any effects to their quality, condition, or size since there would be no ground disturbance or habitat modifications. Therefore, there is no potential to affect wetlands.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: There is no ground disturbance associated with this project and therefore, there is no potential to affect groundwater and aquifers.

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



Explanation: There would be no changes to land use and no impacts to specially-designated areas. Therefore, no potential to affect land use or specially-designated areas.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: There would be no changes to visual quality associated with this project and therefore, there is no potential to impact visual quality.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: The project does not involve actions that have emissions so there is no potential to impact air quality.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: The project does not involve actions that generate noise so there is no potential to impact ambient noise levels.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: All proposed actions involve working in and around moving water, which poses some risk to human health and safety. But all actions are standard and customary RM&E activities that follow specific guidance to ensure quality data and safe working conditions that would mitigate for that risk.

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, if necessary:

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: These actions would occur on public lands owned by the State of Washington (Shipherd Falls fish ladder) and the U.S. Government (Gifford Pinchot National Forest). All information collected is available to the public.

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

Signed: /s/ Ted Gresh

Ted Gresh ECF-4
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: September 30, 2019