

**Categorical Exclusion Determination**  
Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Asotin Creek Salmon Population Assessment Project

**Project No.:** 2002-053-00

**Project Manager:** Russell Scranton, EWP-4

**Location:** Asotin and Garfield Counties, Washington

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B3.3 Research related to conservation of fish, wildlife, and cultural resources

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to trap, collect data, PIT tag fish, and use the information to assess abundance, productivity, survival rates, and distribution of ESA-listed salmonid populations in the Asotin Creek Subbasin. The focus of the project would be on Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed Threatened Snake River Basin (SR) summer steelhead, SR spring Chinook salmon, and Columbia River Basin bull trout, when encountered.

WDFW would operate and maintain 5 temporary/portable fish traps, collect biological data and PIT tag fish on private land at 4 locations in Asotin, George, Tenmile and Alpowa Creeks. Data collection and PIT tagging would occur on site using equipment brought in and removed daily by foot or in trucks. The location, type of trap, method of installation, and position on the landscape at each site is described below. All work would occur without excavation or removal of vegetation.

**Asotin Creek** - Two traps, an adult weir and juvenile rotary screw trap, would be operated and maintained in Asotin Creek approximately 100 meters (m) apart.

The adult weir would be anchored to the substrate with metal pins and duckbill anchors. Trapping components would be in-stream with the exception of two deflector fences (less than 10 feet in length) that funnel water back into the stream and over the weir in the event of high water. All components would be within the high-water mark.

The juvenile trap, a floating rotary screw trap, would be installed downstream of the adult weir. This trap would be anchored at two existing points with cables from winches on the pontoons of the trap. One anchor is attached to an exposed cliff face on the shore, 20 m upstream and 10 m above the high-water mark. The other is located 20 m upstream attached to a dyke. Both anchors are above ground and drilled into exposed rock. The anchors have been in place for 10 years and were installed without excavation. Installation of the cables would not require the removal of any vegetation.

**George Creek** - An adult weir would be operated and maintained in George Creek. The weir would be anchored to the substrate with metal pins and duckbill anchors. A minimal amount of substrate would be moved to install a rail and trap box. All trap components would within the high-water mark.

**Tenmile Creek** - An adult fixed-picket weir with a trap box would be operated and maintained in Tenmile Creek. The weir would be anchored with sandbags. All components would be installed below the high-water mark.

**Alpowa Creek** - An adult weir would be operated and maintained in Alpowa Creek. The weir would not require anchoring but would be held in place with sandbags placed on the substrate. All components are within the high-water mark.

**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/ Sarah T. Biegel  
Sarah T. Biegel  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: April 09, 2020

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:** Asotin Creek Salmon Population Assessment Project

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### Project Site Description

Work would occur on private lands along and within Asotin, George, Tenmile and Alpowa Creeks in southeast Washington. The creeks are located in the Asotin Subbasin of the Columbia River Basin. George and Tenmile Creeks are tributaries to Asotin Creek. Asotin and Alpowa Creeks are tributaries to the Snake River, a tributary to the Columbia River. Both anadromous and resident fish bearing are present in the Subbasin. Vegetation and land use surrounding project sites consists of riparian vegetation, grasslands and agriculture. Each site would occupy <0.5 acre for the traps, data collection, and PIT tagging activities, and occur for 1 to 2 hours. Access would be along existing roads and a dyke by truck or foot.

### Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. <b>Historic and Cultural Resources</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Proposed work would occur in-stream and on dry land. Work would not involve excavation, removal of vegetation, or attachment to structures. A BPA archaeologist reviewed the proposed activities and determined that they do not have the potential to cause effects to historical or cultural resources.		
2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Proposed work would not involve excavation or removal of vegetation, and vehicles would travel on existing roads. There would be little to no potential to impact geology and soils.		
3. <b>Plants</b> (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Proposed work would occur on small areas and for short durations of time at each site, and would not involve removal of vegetation. There would be little potential to impact listed plant species and habitats.		
4. <b>Wildlife</b> (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Proposed work would result in temporary disturbance or displacement of wildlife at each sites. Work would occur on small areas and for short durations of time, thus there would be little potential to impact listed wildlife.		

5. **Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish**

(including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)

Explanation: Minimal, temporary disturbance to water and fish would occur from in-stream equipment and foot traffic. WDFW would conduct work in accordance with their state Hydraulic Project Approval to mitigate minimal disturbance to water. WDFW would also conduct work in accordance with their NOAA Fisheries Section 7 Determination of Take Authorization and Renewed Permit under the 2019 Columbia River System BiOp for direct take of threatened steelhead and Chinook salmon; and US Fish and Wildlife Service Section 6 Cooperative Agreement for take of threatened bull trout, to mitigate temporary disturbance to listed fish.

Proposed work would be conducted on land and instream, so there would be no disturbance to floodplains.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: Proposed work would not occur in wetlands, so there would be no disturbance to wetlands.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: No ground or groundwater disturbance would occur.

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

Explanation: No change in land use would occur.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: Proposed fish traps would be installed low in the horizon in-stream and occupy a small area of each stream. Proposed data collection and PIT tagging would occur on a small area of land, for a short duration, and equipment would be brought in and carried out daily. There would be little potential to impact visual quality.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: Proposed actions would not emit pollutants. There would be no potential to degrade air quality.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: Proposed work would use hand tools and manual labor. Vehicle traffic to and from the sites would be temporary and short duration. There would be little potential to impact area noise.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: The proposed project would use sharp tools and anesthesia to PIT tag fish. WDFW would train individuals conducting the PIT tagging in the proper techniques and follow standard protocols. Additionally, proposed activities would occur on private land away for public activity. There would be little potential to effect 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, 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:

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### **Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Description: Coordination with landowners would be completed by WDFW prior to work starting and proposed activities would occur according to terms and conditions for access and use of the lands.

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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  
Brenda Aguirre – ECF-4

Date: April 9, 2020