

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Survival Estimate for Passage through Snake and Columbia River Dams and Reservoirs

**Project No.:** 1993-029-00

**Project Manager:** Christine Petersen, EWP-4

**Location:** Whitman, WA and Clatsop, OR

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B 3.3 Research related to conservation of fish, wildlife, and cultural resources.

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to mark and tag approximately 60,000 juvenile salmonids with Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tags. Also, BPA would provide partial funding for pair PIT tag trawl operation in the Columbia River estuary. The data collected from the PIT tags would provide annual estimates of travel time and survival of juvenile salmonids through individual reaches of the Columbia River System. Data collected would be used by the region in evaluating structural and operational changes made to improve juvenile fish passage. Data based on PIT tagged smolts would be used to determine smolt-to-adult returns (SAR) and to evaluate how juvenile passage history and experience is related to the SARs.

NOAA fisheries would PIT tag smolts at Lower Granite Dam each year as part of this study to augment the number of tagged smolts available for survival estimation for stocks of interest. In most years, wild spring/summer Chinook salmon, wild steelhead, and hatchery steelhead are tagged and released at Lower Granite Dam.

In total, NOAA would mark natural-origin and hatchery-origin juvenile steelhead, and juvenile Spring/Summer Chinook at the Lower Granite Dam. These include:

- Approximately 20,000 hatchery-origin juvenile steelhead
- Approximately 20,000 natural-origin juvenile steelhead
- Approximately 20,000 natural-origin juvenile Spring/Summer Chinook

In addition, through a cost-share agreement with US Army Corps of Engineers, BPA would partially fund the pair PIT tag trawl operation in the Columbia River estuary. Fish would be detected using the pair PIT tag detection arrays attached to the trawl net of a trawling boat. Data provided by the pair trawl is necessary for survival estimation through the final reach to the tailrace of Bonneville Dam.

**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/ Catherine Clark

Catherine Clark  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Motus Recruiting and Staffing, INC

Reviewed by: Chad Hamel

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel  
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: February 27, 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.

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## Project Site Description

There are two primary project site locations on the Columbia and Snake Rivers. Lower Granite Dam (PIT Tagging) and Jones Beach (Collect and Validate PIT Trawl Data). Lower Granite Dam is located on the Snake River in Whitman, Washington 22 miles south of Colfax and 35 miles north of Pomeroy. Jones Beach is located on the Columbia River mainstem in Clatsop, Oregon 5 miles Northeast of Westport.

## 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> There are no ground disturbing activities proposed. Therefore, the proposed activities would have no potential to affect historic or cultural resources.		
2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There are no ground disturbing activities proposed. Therefore, proposed activities would have no effect to geology or soils in the project area.		
3. <b>Plants</b> (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There are no ground disturbing or vegetation removing activities proposed. Therefore, proposed activities would utilize existing access points. No soil disturbance or disturbance of vegetation including Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed plants.		
4. <b>Wildlife</b> (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Minor, temporary displacement of wildlife due to noise and human presence from project activities could occur. No long-term effect on wildlife or their habitat.		

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

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

Explanation: PIT tagging wild-origin and hatchery-origin anadromous salmonids is a common and widespread activity within the Columbia River basin; the majority of fish tagged would be wild-origin fish.

Since these activities are requirements in the Biological Opinion under the 2008 NOAA Fisheries Federal Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion (as supplemented in 2010 and 2014) (2008 BiOp) and ongoing commitments under the 2019 NOAA Fisheries Columbia River System BiOp (2019 CRS BiOp), NOAA Fisheries annually issues a Determination of Take Memorandum describing the maximum number of individual ESA-listed fish may be tagged in a given year. Since these activities take place in Bull Trout critical habitat USFWS issued a Section 10 recovery permit for PIT tagging activities at the Lower Granite Dam.

There would be no impact to adjacent waterbodies or floodplains because no ground disturbing activities are proposed. All work would be carried out at existing facilities or at mobile PIT tagging trailers.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: Proposed activities would not occur in or near wetlands. Therefore, no impacts to wetlands.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: No impact to groundwater or aquifers.

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

Explanation: No change to land use.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: Minor, temporary changes to visual quality could occur during proposed project activities.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: Minor, temporary generation of emissions associated with increased vehicular use would occur during project activities.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: Minor and temporary intermittent noise would occur during implementation.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: No known hazardous materials in the project areas.

### 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: No notification; All work would be conducted at existing facilities or at mobile facilities accessed on existing public roads.

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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/ Catherine Clark Date: February 27, 2020  
Catherine Clark, ECF-4  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Motus Recruiting and Staffing, INC