

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Yakama Action Effectiveness PIT Array Installation

**Project No.:** 2017-003-00

**Project Manager:** Matthew Schwartz, EWM-4

**Location:** Okanogan County, WA

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

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Upper Columbia Monitoring Project (UCM), a research project administered by the Confederated Bands and Tribes of the Yakama Nation. Funding the proposed activities fulfills ongoing commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp), commitments specified in the 2020 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Columbia River System BiOp (2020 FWS CRS BiOp), and Bonneville's commitments to the Confederated Bands and Tribes of the Yakama Nation under the 2018 Columbia River Fish Accord Extension agreement, while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the 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.).

The UCM aims to monitor the fish responses to habitat restoration projects within the Upper Columbia River Basin. To do so, the project has proposed the use of passive integrated transponder (PIT) tag arrays to study fish movement.

## **PIT Tag Array Installation**

Two flat plate antenna arrays would be installed along the stream bottoms in the Chewuch River. One array would be installed both downstream and upstream from the Chewuch RM4.5 treatment reach. The treatment reach would be the site of a future restoration project, so the arrays would be used to collect pre-project condition information. Each array would consist of five plate antennas in a single line that would be individually powered by IS1001 antenna control nodes (ACN). Each ACN would be placed inside of a submersible enclosure, anchored 8-10' from each antenna and buried in the substrate. The ACNs would be daisy chained together by cables and routed back to a small metal job box located on the stream bank where the IS1001 transceiver would be located. The arrays would cover the wetted width of the stream, approximately 25 to 30 meters. The work would be done primarily with hand tools; no heavy equipment would be used. The project area would be accessed on foot and equipment would utilize existing nearby access roads, vehicle pullouts, and staging areas.

The upstream array would be powered by a thermoelectric generator (TEG). For TEG, the array is powered by a 500 or 100 gallon propane tank that would be placed inside of a green security cage and placed on the stream bank. The downstream array would be powered by hardwire. For hardwire, the array would be plugged into available power on private property and would require a landowner agreement. The landowner agreements would cover the cost of electricity to power the array for a year. Additional activities would include: maintaining power to the arrays, repairing and replacing damaged or defective equipment, and making adjustments to the detection efficiency of the arrays.

**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/ Shawn Skinner

Shawn Skinner

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

October 28, 2020

Date

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:** Yakama Action Effectiveness PIT Array Installation

## **Project Site Description**

This treatment reach site is located at approximately river mile 4.2 to 4.6 of the Chewuch River. A PIT array would be installed both upstream and downstream from the treatment reach. The treatment reach would be the site of an Upper Columbia Habitat Restoration project that is set to begin in the summer of 2021.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA archaeologist confirmed that the proposed activities would not have the potential to affect historic properties or cultural resources.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, short-term soil disturbance from in-stream antenna placement. All work would be done with hand tools to minimize the impact. The control box for the PIT tag array would sit atop the ground, resulting in no soil disturbance.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal or State special-status plant species are within the project site. Streamside equipment may require minor disturbance to nearby plants that are hindering installation, but no broad-scale vegetation removal is proposed.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal or State special-status wildlife species are within the project site. Minor, temporary impacts to local wildlife from human presence and noise during installation.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions.

Explanation: Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed fish species (Chinook, steelhead, and bull trout) and their designated critical habitats are present in the Chewuch River. Minor, short-term disturbance to fish during array installation would occur. No action proposed would physically alter any aquatic habitat site; there would be no adverse physical changes to water bodies, floodplains, or fish from these actions.

Notes:

- HIP conservation measures would be applied for the PIT tag array installation. ESA HIP consultation Project Notification Form 2021011 for these actions was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on October 27, 2020.

## 6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is indicated as riverine based on NWI maps, but the impacts would be minor because the construction area and footprint are quite small and therefore little to no impact to wetlands.

## 7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed actions have no potential to impact groundwater.

## 8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions would not impact or change land use.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No visually prominent vegetative, landform, or structural changes would be made. The PIT tag arrays would be placed on the river's bed, below the surface of the water. The control boxes would be placed on the bank of the river, but would not impact the overall visual quality.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, short-term impact to air quality from vehicle emissions during installation.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, short-term increase in ambient noise from construction vehicles and PIT tag array installation.

## 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: Proposed actions would occur on private lands and landowners would be notified before any work is started. Landowners were consulted to help determine which power source would work best on their property to power the arrays.

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

Signed: /s/ Shawn Skinner October 28, 2020  
Shawn Skinner, ECF-4 Date  
Environmental Protection Specialist