

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Lake Pend Oreille/Dworshak Reservoir Fish Migration Research

Project No.: 2019-005-00

Project Manager: Sandra Fife – EWL - 4

Location: Bonner, Clearwater, and Kootenai counties, Idaho

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B3.3 Research related to conservation of fish, wildlife, and cultural resources; 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 conduct aquatic research and monitoring and predator suppression (primarily lake trout and walleye) in Lake Pend Oreille and Dworshak Reservoir. The proposed actions would inform conservation actions and serve as partial mitigation for impacts to resident fish populations and resulting fisheries from Albeni Falls and Dworshak Dams. Funding these programs would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System, 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.).

Research and Monitoring: Status and trend monitoring would be conducted on a variety of species including resident kokanee salmon; *Mysis* shrimp; and the lake trout, walleye, northern pike, and rainbow trout that prey on kokanee. Fish would be sampled by net trawling, gill and hoop netting, electrofishing, angling, or hydroacoustic surveys. Data would be collected on weight, length, stomach contents, and genetics of the sampled fish to better understand factors such as diet, age, and growth rates. Additional kokanee population data would be collected through shoreline spawning counts and site monitoring. Fish exploitation and survival data would be collected through annual marking and tagging of wild and hatchery resident fishes. Wild resident fish, including ESA-listed bull trout, caught as bycatch would be marked for possible re-catch observation.

Limnological monitoring and water sample collection would be conducted monthly from April to November at the Dworshak Reservoir to evaluate water quality per EPA's National Pollution Discharge Elimination System requirements and reduce harmful algal blooms.

Predator Suppression: Gill nets would be deployed in Lake Pend Oreille during winter months to capture and remove walleye and lake trout that compete with bull trout and prey on kokanee and cutthroat trout. Nets would be set daily in areas identified by telemetry data to have the highest lake trout or walleye densities and also to minimize bycatch of bull trout. Data (e.g.,

length, capture location, catch rates, age, growth) from netted fish would be analyzed to evaluate the responses of lake trout and walleye to removal efforts. Recapture rates of tagged bull trout and lake trout would be used to generate an estimate of exploitation rate.

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/ Lindsey Arotin

Lindsey Arotin
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

<u>/s/ Sarah T. Biegel</u>	<u>April 6, 2021</u>
Sarah T. Biegel	Date
NEPA Compliance Officer	

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: Lake Pend Oreille/Dworshak Reservoir Resident Fish Migration Research

Project Site Description

Lake Pend Oreille is located near Sandpoint, and extends across both Bonner and Kootenai counties, Idaho and is owned and operated by the Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District. The lake covers 148 square miles of the Kaniksu National Forest and is fed by the Clark Fork River and Pack River. Dworshak is located near Ahsahka, in Clearwater County, Idaho and is owned and operated by the Army Corps of Engineers, Walla Walla District. The reservoir extends upstream 54 miles into Clearwater Nation Forest in the Bitterroot Mountains and is fed by the North Fork Clearwater River. Both reservoirs provide for flood control, hydroelectric power, recreational opportunities, fish and wildlife habitat, and improved water quality.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA has determined the proposed activities would have no potential to cause effects to historic properties. The proposed activities would not result in ground disturbance that could potentially impact archaeological resources. No modifications to existing historically built resources are proposed.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance would occur as a result of the proposed project. Therefore, there would be no impact to geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no special-status species and the proposed project would not require any tree or vegetation removal, and so would not result in any effects to vegetation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary disturbance of normal wildlife behavior could occur from elevated human presence at the collection and monitoring sites. Wildlife species present in the area could be temporarily affected.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Floodplains and waterbodies would not be impacted as no ground-disturbing activities would occur during proposed actions. There would be brief physical handling of all captured fishes, including ESA-listed bull trout. Incidental take of ESA listed bull trout is covered through a Section 6 cooperative agreement with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing activities are proposed; thus, the action does not have the potential to impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing activities that may affect groundwater or aquifers are proposed.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Access to field sites is on existing road networks and all activities would be compatible with local land use on public roads and public lands.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new equipment or installation would occur and the proposed actions would not impact visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be carried out at the existing field sites and would have no effect on air quality. Any increase in emissions from vehicles accessing field sites would be very minor and short term.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: None of the proposed activities would result in an increase in ambient noise.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Workers carrying the proposed actions of RM&E activities are trained in proper equipment management techniques. This activity is not considered hazardous nor does it result in any health or safety risks to the general public.

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: This work would be implemented at existing facilities, in the reservoirs, or on public lands managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

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

Signed: /s/ Lindsey Arotin April 6, 2021
Lindsey Arotin, ECF - 4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist