Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: Habitat Project Action Effectiveness Monitoring

Project No.: 2016-001-00

Project Manager: David Kaplowe, EWM-4

Location: Multiple counties, Washington, Oregon, 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 exercises and simulations.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund Cramer Fish Sciences to implement and adaptively manage the Action Effectiveness Monitoring (AEM) Program. The AEM program would monitor and evaluate habitat improvement actions implemented throughout the Columbia River Basin, with program partners including Tribes, Federal agencies, states, county and local governments, non-profit organizations, and universities.

Habitat improvement actions evaluated under the AEM Program include fish passage (complete and partial barrier removal and replacement), instream enrichment (large wood structure installation), floodplain enhancement (levee modification, floodplain reconnection, and channel reconstruction), and riparian restoration (planting and invasive plant species removal). A multiple before-after control-impact (MBACI) design would be used to evaluate sample sites before and after implementation. Personnel would assist program partners in data collection and survey.

The proposed AEM actions include:

- Document BPA-approved AEM Program modifications in monitoringmethods.org.
- Maintain AEM Program, ensure that the data are collected consistently according to the associated protocol and modify the study design or methods to maintain statistical validity and replicability.
- Conduct surveys, including conducting snorkel surveys; site assessments (macroinvertebrate surveys, vegetation transects, stream transects, topographic surveys, etc.); ongoing data collection (water temperature, stream flows, turbidity, etc) at sample sites.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills ongoing commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp). These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with USFWS on the O&M of the Columbia River System. These actions would 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.).

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/ Israel Duran
Israel Duran
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient/CRGT

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel
Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange *March 29, 2021*
Katey C. Grange 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: Habitat Project Action Effectiveness Monitoring

Project Site Description

All activities would occur within waterbodies in the Columbia River basin in multiple counties in Oregon, Idaho and Washington.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no ground-disturbing actions planned and this project would not impact historic or cultural resources.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no ground-disturbing actions planned and geology and soils would not be impacted by the proposed activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no ground-disturbing actions planned and there are no anticipated impacts to any plant species, and none exist within the immediate area of impact.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no ground-disturbing actions planned and actions would have a temporary impact to wildlife within the project area from elevated human presence during sampling activities. There would be no effect on Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed of sensitive wildlife species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Survey activities such as snorkel surveys, site assessments, and ongoing data collection at sample sites may temporarily disturb fish, including ESA-listed fish species. Effects to ESA-listed species under NMFS and FWS management would be covered under

the Habitat Improvement Program programmatic biological opinion. Sites would be located near bodies of water. However, the proposed activities would not alter waterbodies or floodplains.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: There are no ground-disturbing actions planned and activities would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no ground-disturbing actions planned and activities would not impact or change groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The activities would not impact or change land use.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The activities would not impact visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The work would not impact air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Noise levels may be increased, but this would only occur during the normal working hours of the study period.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Safety regulations would be followed as necessary.

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: All work is at existing field sites accessed on existing roads on public lands. This work would be implemented with the knowledge and coordination with partners, and landowners as needed.

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

Signed: */s/ Israel Duran* *March 29, 2021*

Israel Duran ECF-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient/CRGT