

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Resident Fish Monitoring and Assessment above Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee Dams

Project No.: 1997-004-00

Project Manager: Carlos Matthew, EWU-4

Location: Bonner, Columbia, Ferry, Garfield, Grant, Kootenai, Lincoln, Okanagon, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Umatilla, Union, and Yakima counties, Washington, Oregon, Idaho

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B3.1 Site characterization and environmental monitoring, and B3.3 Research related to conservation of fish, wildlife, and cultural resources exercises and simulations

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration proposes to fund the assessment of resident fish species known to exist above Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph dams. The projects are designed and guided jointly by Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Kalispel Natural Resource Department (KNRD), Spokane Tribe of Indians (STI), and Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CCT).

The proposed actions include:

1. Operate and maintain incline plane traps in Priest River tributaries (Sanborn, Sadler, Benton, and Quartz creeks) and maintain PIT tag antenna arrays in Sanborn, Sadler, Benton, Quartz, and Indian creeks. Incline plane traps would be installed in the spring and removed in the late summer. PIT tag arrays would operate throughout the year.
2. Trap and mark up to 1,500 westslope cutthroat and redband trout in Sadler, Sanborn, Benton, and Quartz creeks.
3. Data collection from PIT tag arrays in Benton, Sadler, Sanborn, Quartz, and Indian creeks.
4. Electrofish, gillnet, and fyke net trap up to 500 northern pike in Box Canyon Reservoir in late spring through early summer.
5. Electrofish and tag up to 1,100 redband trout in the Spokane River, Onion and Big Sheep creeks.
6. Fish, hydrologic, and geomorphologic surveys: Installing stream gauges and passive integrated transponder (PIT) tag arrays; conducting snorkel surveys; conducting site assessments (e.g., pebble counts, elevation surveys); ongoing data collection.

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

All activities would occur within the Columbia River Basin upriver of the Chief Joseph and Grand Coulee dams in multiple counties in Idaho, Oregon and Washington.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities would occur within the confines of the existing monitoring structure footprints, and would not require any ground-disturbing activities for the completion of this work; thus, BPA determined that there would be no potential to affect 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: No ground-disturbing or vegetation removal activities are proposed; thus, the proposed activities do not have the potential to affect wildlife or wildlife habitat. All work would be implemented at existing facilities or field sites.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed activities would have minor and/or temporary effects to water bodies and fish such as increased turbidity, aquatic habitat disturbances, increased physiological stress to aquatic life. However, there would be no permanent adverse physical changes to water bodies or floodplains resulting from the proposed actions. Anadromous fish are anthropogenically blocked from the project sites and although there are no current documented bull trout and no critical habitat within the project areas there is potential for bull trout to occur, which is addressed in an informal Section 7 consultation with US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). Non-target species would be noted and released. .

Notes:

- Sponsor would complete state permits and report fish take (trapped, handled, tagged fish), including non-target species.
- If bull trout are encountered the sponsor would report to USFWS and determine if further consultation is needed.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: No ground-disturbing activities are proposed; thus, the proposed activities do not have the potential to affect wetlands. All work would be implemented at existing facilities or field sites.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing activities are proposed; thus, the proposed activities do not have the potential to affect wetlands. All work would be implemented at existing facilities or field sites.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing activities are proposed; thus, the proposed activities do not have the potential to affect land use. All work would be implemented at existing facilities or field sites.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be implemented at existing facilities or field sites; thus, the proposed activities do not have the potential to affect visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be implemented at existing facilities or field sites; thus, the proposed activities do not have the potential to affect air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be implemented at existing facilities or field sites and would not raise noise above normal workday levels.

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: All work at existing facilities or traps are managed by project managers and implemented on public or tribal lands (e.g., Colville National Forest, Yakama Nation). Work would be done in coordination with land managers (USFS; Oregon, Washington, and Idaho state lands; Yakama Nation; KNRD; STI; and CCT). Any work on private lands would only occur after project managers obtain landowner approval.

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 May 10, 2021
Israel Duran ECF-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient/CRGT