

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: CTUIR Stream Temperature Monitoring

Project No.: 2007-252-00

Project Manager: Jennifer Plemons – EWM-4

Location: Umatilla County, OR

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B3.1 Site characteristics and environmental monitoring.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) to monitor water temperatures year-round in the Umatilla River and tributaries. Water temperature is a limiting factor for salmon abundance and survival in Pacific Northwest rivers. The Umatilla River CTUIR would use data to support water temperature modeling efforts to inform future habitat restoration projects in the basin and other basins with similar characteristics. Project activities would include installation of temperature loggers on rocks in stream beds via wire or glue (no anchoring) and hanging air pressure loggers on tree limbs. Loggers would be installed during low flows in September in the upstream or downstream end of alluvial floodplains. Field crews would use established roads and trails to access monitoring sites. Sites would be visited annually for data downloads and replacement of non-functional loggers. Up to 25 loggers would be installed each year in the upper Umatilla River (from approximately river mile (RM) 65 to RM 80) and Meacham Creek (from the confluence with the Umatilla River to approximately RM 7).

These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with both NMFS and USFWS on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System. These actions also support Bonneville's commitments to CTUIR in the Columbia River Fish Accord, as amended, 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.).

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.

Jacquelyn Schei
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Sarah T. Biegel
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: CTUIR Stream Temperature Monitoring

Project Site Description

Proposed activities would occur at monitoring sites upstream and downstream of alluvial floodplains in the upper Umatilla River and Meacham Creek at the base of the Blue Mountains in Umatilla County in northeastern Oregon. Monitoring sites in the upper stretch of the Umatilla River (RM 65 to RM 80) would be located on Tribal or private properties within the boundaries of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (nearby communities include Cayuse and Gibbon) and on U.S. Forest Service land in the Umatilla National Forest. The confluence of Meacham Creek is within reservation boundaries near Gibbon and monitoring sites would be on Tribal or private properties. The area has a long history of agricultural practices and livestock grazing, including irrigation, land conversion, and stream channelization to prevent flooding, that have led to several detrimental effects on stream and riparian ecosystems and a decrease in salmon habitat.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Stream temperature monitoring activities would have no ground disturbance as temperature loggers would be attached to rocks in stream beds via wire or glue (no anchoring). There would be no ground-disturbing activities. Thus, the proposed work would not have the potential to impact historic or cultural resources.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Stream temperature monitoring activities would have no ground disturbance and would have no impact on geology or soils. Temperature loggers would be attached to rocks in stream beds via wire or glue (no anchoring). There would be no soil displacement, soil mixing, or other mechanical soil disturbance.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no federally-listed or state special-status species and habitats in project areas. Project activities would be limited to travel on existing roads and trails and installing temperature loggers in streams, so the potential for vegetation disturbance is low and there would be no long-term impacts.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), which is ESA-listed as Endangered, has the potential to be near project areas; however, the monitoring sites lack suitable habitat for the gray wolf and it is unlikely that they would be in project areas in the short duration field crews are present (approximately one hour during the daytime each year). The yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), which is ESA-listed as Threatened, also has the potential to be in or near the project, but none of its designated critical habitat overlaps with the project location. There are no documented occurrences of either species in or near project sites (BPA eGIS LiveMap 3.1.1). The monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*), which is a Candidate for ESA listing, has the potential to be in the project area, but there is no designated critical habitat. There are no state special-status wildlife species or their habitats known to exist in the project area. Wildlife present during project activities may be temporarily disturbed by human presence and noise; however, the disturbance would be short-term (an hour or less) and conditions would return to normal once work was complete. Therefore, impacts would be temporary and negligible and would have no effects on wildlife.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Federally-listed steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), Chinook salmon (*O. tshawytscha*), and bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) and their designated critical habitats are present in project areas. Pacific lamprey (*Entosphenus tridentatus*), which are an important species to the Tribe, are also present in the Umatilla River. There are no other federally-listed or state special-status species in the project area.

No changes to the existing conditions of streams would occur. Possible impacts on listed and non-listed fish present in the project area at the time work occurs (installing or retrieving loggers) would be disturbance from human presence and noise. Work would be completed within an hour at each site and conditions would return to normal once crews left the site. Therefore, any impacts would be temporary and negligible and would not have effects on fish species or designated critical habitats.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not change the hydrology within the project area, and any activities within or near wetlands would not involve ground-disturbing activities. No fill, excavation, or destruction of wetlands would occur.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or use of groundwater are proposed. No herbicide use is proposed. The proposed actions would have no impact to groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The underlying land use would not change and no impact to specially-designated areas would occur as a result of this project.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would have no effect on visual quality as crews would camouflage materials and temperature loggers placed in streams to avoid tampering.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minor, temporary effects to the air quality of the environment from dust and exhaust due to vehicle use for site access. Normal conditions would return upon project completion.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would result in a temporary increase in ambient noise. Any noise emitted from equipment would be short-term and temporary, during daylight hours, and cease following project completion. There would be no long-term impacts from noise.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work is not considered hazardous, nor does it result in any health or safety risks to the general public. All personnel would use best management practices to protect worker health and safety.

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: For lands not owned by the Tribe, CTUIR has a variety of agreements in place to access properties for monitoring. There are informal, oral agreements with a few private landowners. There is also a long-standing memorandum of agreement between the CTUIR and the U.S. Forest Service.

Signed:

Jacquelyn Schei, ECF - 4
Environmental Protection Specialist