

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Pacific Lamprey Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation

Project No.: 1994-026-00, 2008-308-00, 2008-470-00, 2008-524-00, 2011-014-00, 2017-005-00

Project Manager: James Barron, EWU-4; Elizabeth Santana, EWM-4

Location: Field sites may be in multiple counties in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington

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 multiple parties, including but not limited to the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC), Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs (CTWS), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Yakama Nation, and non-profit organizations and universities, to perform routine Pacific lamprey (*Entosphenus tridentatus*, "lamprey") research, monitoring, and evaluation (RME) activities in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington. Funding supports BPA's commitments to the CRITFC, CTUIR, CTWS and Yakama Nation in the Columbia River Fish Accord, as amended, while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System on fish and wildlife in the main stem 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.).

BPA proposes to fund the following types of lamprey RME actions that would be covered under this CX. Work may include one or more of the RME actions listed below:

Passive Population Surveys: A variety of passive survey methods may be carried out to determine lamprey distribution and/or abundance, including visual surveys for redds, adults, and adult carcasses.

eDNA Sampling: Water or sediment samples may be collected and analyzed for DNA released from lamprey into the surrounding environment as an indication of lamprey presence or absence. Sampling for eDNA is non-invasive, would not require handling fish, and would generally be completed from the stream bank without entering the water; although field crews may enter the stream, if required.

Collection, Tagging, and Translocation: Adult, juvenile, and larval lamprey may be collected using a variety of methods, including selectively collecting by hand or dip net, in lamprey-specific fish traps that exclude other fish species, in salmon traps that are operated under their own Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation, or lamprey-specific electrofishing techniques.

Larval lamprey electrofishing surveys would be conducted using backpack electrofishing units and lamprey-specific electrofishing techniques. Electrofishing would be conducted following protocols as described in the USFWS's *Best Management Practices to Minimize Adverse Effects to Pacific Lamprey (Entosphenus tridentatus)* and the NOAA June 2000 *Guidelines for Electrofishing Waters Containing Salmonids Listed Under the Endangered Species Act*.

Collected lamprey may be implanted with passive integrated transponder (PIT) tags and/or radio tags. Tagged lamprey could also be implanted with a secondary dart or floy tag, in case the PIT or radio tag is expelled. Lamprey movement would then be monitored as they migrate through an existing network of PIT tag arrays or by using mobile radio telemetry equipment. PIT tag arrays previously established would be removed and reinstalled without ground disturbance in the same locations each season. The installation of new PIT tag or acoustic telemetry arrays in new locations would not be covered by this Categorical Exclusion.

Collected lamprey would be released near the collection sites or translocated to other stream reaches in an effort to increase lamprey densities in areas where populations are declining or extirpated. In some cases, collected lamprey would be euthanized for biochemical analysis or transferred to a laboratory setting for controlled experiments with no intention of returning them to the wild.

Genetic Sampling: Non-lethal caudal fin clips may be collected and archived for genetic analysis in a laboratory setting.

Laboratory-Based Research: Indoors in a laboratory setting, lamprey may be euthanized for biochemical analysis or used as live test subjects for controlled experiments. Live specimens subject to experimentation would be euthanized or retained following completion of the studies, with no intention of returning them to the wild.

Habitat Assessments: At field sites, habitat assessments would involve collection of quantitative and qualitative data, including:

- Water temperature, pH, conductivity, and turbidity
- Organic debris depth and substrate size
- Channel unit type (i.e., pool or riffle), channel position (i.e., margin or mid-channel), wetted channel width and depth, and flow
- Percent canopy closure and riparian land cover

Habitat assessments would be non-invasive, would not require ground disturbance, would not require handling fish, and would generally be completed from the stream bank without entering the water; although field crews may enter the stream, if necessary.

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; 89 FR 34074, April 30, 2024), 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. ¹

FOR Daphne Day
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

¹ BPA is aware that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), on February 25, 2025, issued an interim final rule to remove its NEPA implementing regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500–1508. Based on CEQ guidance, and to promote completion of its NEPA review in a timely manner and without delay, in this CX BPA is voluntarily relying on the CEQ regulations, in addition to DOE's own regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021, to meet its obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 *et seq.*

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: Pacific Lamprey Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation

Project Site Description

Field sites may be in multiple waterbodies 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 actions would be limited to biological sampling and environmental and habitat condition assessment. Activities would typically occur within laboratories or stream channels and would not result in ground disturbance that could potentially impact archaeological resources. No modifications to existing built historic resources are proposed. Therefore, the proposed actions would have no potential to cause effects to historic properties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance would occur as a result of the proposed actions. Therefore, the proposed actions would not impact geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions would not require any tree or vegetation removal or management. Limited disturbance could occur from trampling of plants or habitats, if present. However, the proposed actions would be temporary and the net effect of these actions would be similar to those associated with routine events and processes that commonly occur in streams (e.g., large wildlife walking up to a stream). Therefore, the proposed actions would have no effect on special-status or other plant species or habitats that may be in project areas.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Limited disturbance of normal wildlife behavior could occur from elevated noise and human presence at the various field sites. However, the proposed actions would be temporary (no more than a few hours at each site) and the net effect of these actions would be similar to those associated with routine events and processes that commonly occur in streams (e.g., large wildlife walking up to a stream, human recreation). Wildlife species that

could be present in the area would likely be habituated to this level of activity. The proposed actions would not result in adverse modification to suitable protected species habitat. Therefore, the proposed actions would have no effect on special-status or other wildlife species or habitats that may be in project areas.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Larval and juvenile lamprey surveys and in-water sample and data collection could disturb streambed sediment, which would temporarily increase turbidity in a limited area. Following completion of the proposed actions, suspended sediments would resettle on the streambed; turbidity would quickly return to pre-existing conditions. The net effect of these actions would be similar to those associated with routine events and processes that commonly occur in streams (e.g., large wildlife walking in a streambed, human recreation). No ground disturbance within floodplains would occur as a result of the proposed actions.

The proposed actions may include using backpack electrofishing equipment and lamprey-specific methods. These methods use voltages and frequencies low enough to avoid harming salmonids and other special-status fish species, while still effectively capturing lamprey. Furthermore, larval and juvenile lamprey habitat (i.e., shallow, depositional areas at the stream margins) largely does not coincide with special-status fish habitat (i.e., rocky substrates in flowing water). Backpack electrofishing equipment operated at lamprey-specific voltage and frequencies generate a small diameter (~18") electrical field, which allows for avoidance of non-lamprey fish, if present.

Therefore, the proposed actions would result in no long-term impact to water bodies and no impact to floodplains. The proposed actions would have no effect on special status fish species or habitats.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some proposed activities (e.g., accessing streams on foot and completing habitat assessments) could take place within or near wetlands. However, no ground disturbance would occur as a result of the proposed actions. Therefore, the proposed actions would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance would occur as a result of the proposed actions. Therefore, the proposed actions would not impact groundwater and aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change in land use and no impact to specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change in visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary dust and emissions could increase in the local area from vehicle and equipment use. There would be no permanent change in air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary noise could increase at field sites from vehicle and equipment use and human presence. However, these actions would be consistent with current activities typical of the field sites. There would be no permanent change in ambient noise.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Individuals carrying out the proposed actions would be trained in proper techniques and equipment use. The project would not generate or use hazardous materials and would not create conditions that would increase risk to human health and safety. No impacts to human health and safety are expected as a result of the proposed actions.

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: Most field sites would be accessed via existing roads and public lands and would not require landowner notification, involvement, or coordination. The individual project sponsors would coordinate site access with private landowners, if applicable.

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

Signed:

FOR Daphne Day
Environmental Protection Specialist