

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Salmon Carcass Outplanting in the Crooked River

**Project No.:** 2010-086-00

**Project Manager:** Matthew Schwartz, EWM-4

**Location:** Idaho County, Idaho

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B1.20 Protection of cultural resources, fish and wildlife habitat

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Nez Perce Tribe (NPT) to outplant salmon carcasses in the Crooked River in Idaho County, Idaho, to increase marine derived nutrients in the ecosystem. The project would benefit Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed Snake River steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) and bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), as well as a variety of non-listed species including, Chinook and coho salmon and a suite of resident fishes.

NPT would outplant 200 to 500 spring and summer Chinook salmon carcasses in the lower 6 miles of the Crooked River. The carcasses would be obtained from the USFWS, Dworshak National Fish Hatchery on the Clearwater River. Carcasses would be tossed into the river from the road, in areas where the river is accessible from existing U.S. Forest Service roads, over about 2 to 4 river miles. Placement of the carcasses would not involve entering the river. The carcasses would typically decay within a few days. The development of access or staging areas is not needed. Implementation would occur mid-August to mid-September each year.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion and the 2020 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Columbia River System Biological Opinion. These actions also support BPA's ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System 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 1021.102 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; 90 FR 29676, July 3, 2025 [Interim Final Rule]) and the current *DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Implementing Procedures*, BPA has determined the following:

- 1) The proposed action fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021;
  - 2) The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion;
- and

- 3) There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal (see attached Environmental Evaluation).

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

Jacquelyn Schei  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Evaluation

# Categorical Exclusion Environmental Evaluation

This evaluation 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:** Salmon Carcass Outplanting in the Crooked River

## **Project Site Description**

The project area is located within the Crooked River Watershed. The watershed and project area consist of mountainous terrain with forested vegetation interspersed with grasslands and meadows. Crooked River is a perennial tributary to the South Fork Clearwater River. Land use activities within the project area include timber harvest, mining, and camping. Intense historic timber harvest and mining practices impacted areas of aquatic habitat critical to the survival of anadromous fish and their associated marine derived nutrient contributions to the ecosystem.

## **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA reviewed the proposed placement of salmon carcasses and determined that this activity does not have the potential to cause effects to historic or cultural resources (ID 2023 033).

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No soil disturbance is proposed.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance or disturbance of existing plants would occur. Carcasses would be thrown from a vehicle on an existing roadway.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) and the North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*), both ESA-listed Threatened, have the potential to be in the project area. No other special status wildlife species are known to occur within the project area. The project area does not overlap with lynx critical habitat and is considered unoccupied by lynx. The project also does not overlap with primary habitat for wolverine. Based on this, as well as the project's short duration and availability of adjacent habitat for dispersal, the project may affect but is not likely to adversely affect lynx or wolverine dispersing through the area. The project would follow the conservation measures in BPA's Habitat Improvement Program ESA Section 7 programmatic consultations (HIP BiOp) to minimize potential impacts. No wildlife habitat would be modified that would permanently displace resident wildlife, though some may be temporarily displaced by disturbance from vehicle noise and human presence.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed steelhead and bull trout are found in the project area. No state special-status species occupy the project area. The project was reviewed under BPA's HIP BiOp and would adhere to all applicable conservation measures, including completing work at times of the year when ESA-listed species are not expected to be present. Carcass placements have the potential to disturb any fish present in the area in the short term when carcasses are thrown into the river. There would be no long-term negative impacts to fish, or their habitat, and the long-term benefits associated with nutrient additions on fish, floodplains, and waterbodies would be positive.

## **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present in the project area.

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance or use of groundwater is proposed.

## **8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use would occur. No specially designated areas are present . Additionally, the project would not impact forest users in the area.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Visual quality may be impacted by work vehicles in the project area and salmon carcasses in the river, but impacts would be local and temporary in nature.

## **10. Air Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Air quality may be impacted by increased vehicle exhaust from work vehicles, but the impact would be local and temporary in nature.

## **11. Noise**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would result in a temporary increase in ambient noise from work vehicles. Any noise emitted would be short-term and temporary during daylight hours and would cease following project completion.

## **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 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: The project area is located on land managed by the Nez Perce-Clearwater National Forest and the proposed activities would occur according to terms and conditions for access and use of the lands.

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

Signed:

Jacquelyn Schei  
Environmental Protection Specialist