

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Upper Columbia Spring Chinook and Steelhead Juvenile and Adult Abundance, Productivity, and Spatial Structure Monitoring

**Project No.:** 2010-034-00

**Project Manager:** Victoria Bohlen, EWU - 4

**Location:** Chelan, Grant, and Okanogan Counties, 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 continue funding the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and Colville Confederated Tribes (CCT) to conduct ongoing salmonid abundance, productivity, and spatial structure monitoring in the Upper Columbia River (UCR) basin. The proposed monitoring would inform recovery actions directed at Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed spring Chinook salmon and steelhead populations in the Wenatchee, Entiat, Methow, and Okanogan Subbasins. WDFW would be the lead agency for the project and actions occurring in the Wenatchee, Entiat, and Methow Subbasins and the CCT would be the lead agency for actions occurring in the Okanogan Subbasin.

Specific objectives of the proposed monitoring include: (1) quantifying run escapement and composition of the populations at multiple spatial scales in the UCR, (2) developing estimates of prespawn mortality and survival for spring Chinook salmon, (3) evaluating patterns of movement, distribution, and habitat utilization that may be associated with patterns in survival and mortality, and (4) developing a predictive model for prespawn mortality that can be used for conservation and incorporated into habitat restoration design and prioritization. To accomplish these objectives, WDFW and the CCT would conduct the following field activities:

1. Operate off-ladder adult fish trap, PIT tag, and collect scales of spring Chinook salmon at Priest Rapids Dam
2. Operate and maintain temporary and permanent PIT tag arrays in the subbasins
3. Operate a rotary screw trap in the Entiat River
4. PIT tag juvenile spring Chinook salmon and steelhead in the Entiat River
5. Operate spring Chinook salmon egg-to-fry survival studies in the Entiat Subbasin

Funding the proposed monitoring would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with the National Marine Fisheries Service and United States Fish and Wildlife Service on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System and would support 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/ Brenda Aguirre

Brenda Aguirre

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel                      June 24, 2021

Sarah T. Biegel

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:** Upper Columbia Spring Chinook and Steelhead Juvenile and Adult Abundance, Productivity, and Spatial Structure Monitoring

## **Project Site Description**

PIT tagging would occur in streams and rivers throughout the Wenatchee, Entiat, Methow, and Okanogan Subbasins of the Upper Columbia River Basin in north central Washington. Adult spring Chinook sampling would occur at the Priest Rapids Dam adult trap on the Columbia River and juvenile spring Chinook and steelhead sampling would occur on the Entiat River.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would occur at existing facilities, fish traps, or PIT arrays. No ground-disturbing activities that may affect historic or cultural resources are proposed; thus, the action would not have the potential to impact these resources.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing activities that may affect geology or soils are proposed; thus, the proposed activities would not have the potential to impact these resources.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing or vegetation removal activities are proposed that may affect plants or habitats; thus, the proposed activities would not have the potential to impact these resources.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The actions would all occur in water and therefore, would not have the potential to affect terrestrial wildlife. Noise generated by vehicles driving to and from worksites would be low and would not be expected to affect nesting birds. Foot traffic noise when working in or hiking to worksites would be negligible.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No ground-disturbing activities that may affect floodplains are proposed; thus, the action would not have the potential to impact this resource. Minimal water body disturbance would occur; erosion control measures would be used. ESA-listed spring Chinook salmon, steelhead, and bull trout and critical habitats occur in the project area subbasins and the UCR basin. Conditions to avoid impacts would be followed.

Notes:

- WDFW/CCT would follow conditions identified in WDFW's Section 10 permit (16979-2R) from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for take of listed salmonids through 12/31/22. WDFW would also submit an annual report of take and compliance with the permit conditions to NMFS for annual authorization.
- WDFW/CCT would follow conditions identified in WDFW's Section 6 Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for incidental take of listed bull trout. WDFW would submit an annual report of bull trout take to the USFWS for annual approval of the cooperative agreement.
- WDFW/CCT would follow conditions identified in WDFW's Hydraulic Project Approval (HPA) for the installation of fish traps (HPA # 2020-9-2+01) through 3/10/2025, operation of PIT tag arrays (HPA # 2021-9-6+01) through 3/31/26, and installation of egg boxes (HPA # 2017-0-171+01) through 7/31/22.

## 6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing activities that may affect wetlands are proposed; thus, the action would not have the potential to impact this resource.

## 7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing activities that may affect groundwater or aquifers are proposed; thus, the action would not have the potential to impact these resources.

## 8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project sites would be accessed via existing road networks. All activities would be compatible with local land use on public roads and lands.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would occur at existing facilities, fish traps, or PIT arrays. No ground-disturbing activities that may affect visual quality are proposed; thus, the action would not have the potential to impact visual quality.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Any increase in emissions from vehicles accessing field sites would be minor and short term.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Any increase in ambient noise from vehicles accessing field sites would be minor and short term.

## **12. Human Health and Safety**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Workers carrying out the proposed action are trained in proper equipment management techniques. This activity is not considered hazardous nor does it result in any health or safety risks to the general public.

### **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: No notification necessary – All work is at existing facilities, fish traps, or PIT arrays on public land and accessed using existing public roads.

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

Signed: /s/ Brenda Aguirre June 24, 2021  
Brenda Aguirre, ECF-4 Date  
Environmental Protection Specialist