

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Snake River Fall Chinook Research & Monitoring Project

Project No.: 1991-029-00

Project Manager: Deborah Docherty

Location: Multiple counties in Idaho, Oregon, Washington

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

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration proposes to fund the U.S. Geological Survey to PIT tag wild fall Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) subyearlings in the Snake River basin and analyze subsequent detection data to estimate survival and growth; describe run timing and life history attributes; evaluate the effectiveness of summer spill; and explore the roles of food availability, growth, and habitat-rearing capacity as potential limiting factors.

The proposed actions would include:

1. Beach seining and PIT tag subyearling Chinook salmon in the Snake River basin.
2. Obtaining up to 350 previously tagged subyearlings from the run passing Lower Granite Dam and record metrics.
3. Surveys, including but not limited to: installing stream gauges and PIT tag arrays; conducting snorkel surveys; conducting aerial surveys (e.g. drones, airplanes, helicopter); conducting site assessments (e.g. pebble counts, elevation surveys); carcass surveys; redd counts; stomach dissection; water quality data; and ongoing data collection.

These activities fulfil some of Bonneville's commitments begun under the 2008 NMFS Federal Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion (as supplemented in 2010 and 2014) (2008 BiOp) and ongoing commitments under the 2019 NMFS Columbia River System BiOp (2019 CRS BiOp).

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), Bonneville 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, Bonneville finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

/s/ Israel Duran

Israel Duran
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient/CRGT

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: May 1, 2020

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.

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Project Site Description

All activities would occur within the Snake River subbasin in multiple counties of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There is no ground disturbance planned and there would be no impacts to historic or cultural resources as a result of these actions.		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There is no ground disturbance planned and geology and soils would not be impacted by the proposed activities.		
3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> 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)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> The actions would not impact wildlife within the project areas.		
5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There would be some impact to listed Snake River fall Chinook salmon; however, USFWS has obtained all necessary Section 10 permits for direct take under the Endangered Species Act. The activities would not impact waterbodies or floodplains due to lack of ground-disturbing activities.		
6. Wetlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There is no ground disturbance planned; activities would not impact wetlands.		
7. Groundwater and Aquifers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There is no ground disturbance planned; activities would not impact or change groundwater or aquifers.		
8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> The activities would not impact or change land use.		

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The activities would not impact visual quality.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: The work would not impact air quality.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Noise levels may be increased, but this would only occur during the normal working hours of the study period.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: Safety regulations would be followed as necessary.

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, if necessary:

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: This work would be implemented at existing facilities or on public lands.

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

Date: May 1, 2020

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Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
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