

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Continued Funding for Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) Biomonitoring of Fish Habitat Research, Monitoring and Evaluation (RM&E).

Project No.: 2009-014-00

Project Manager: D. Docherty, EWM-4

Location: Columbia, Grant, Umatilla, Union, OR.

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 CTUIR for ongoing work for RM&E focusing on the biomonitoring of fish habitat for salmon and steelhead. These activities fulfill 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). The project area is located at multiple sites in Umatilla County, Oregon within a 100 mile radius of Pendleton, Oregon.

This project goal is to conduct standardized habitat surveys and monitoring to support project-level habitat action effectiveness assessments for CTUIR restoration actions at selected control and treatment sites. Activities would be at treatment sites paired with control sites in the Umatilla, Walla Walla, John Day, Grande Ronde and Tucannon River Basins.

This project would implement the following activities to support fish and wildlife management goals:

- **Collect field data:**
 - Pedestrian redd surveys would be conducted for Chinook (June-October) and steelhead (March-June).
 - Snorkel surveys would be conducted for each treatment and control site. Species, size class, habitat, and instream structure usage would be collected. Data derived from snorkel surveys include: juvenile fish density, abundance use of available habitat structures.
 - PIT tagging juvenile spring Chinook in the Upper Umatilla River and Meacham Creek Screw Traps.

Note: The rotary screw traps are operated at RKM 128 on the Umatilla River and at RKM 3 on Meacham Creek under the Umatilla Basin Natural Production RM&E Project (1990-005-01). The juvenile PIT tagging to support the biomonitoring of fish habitat would use fish already captured and would not require additional fish capture.

- Benthic Macroinvertebrate Sampling:
 - Small aquatic animals and larval stages of insects that include dragonfly, stonefly larvae, snails, worms, and beetles would be collected. Collection would involve a small scoop net with six samples taken at each predetermined field site.
- **Validate field data through visual assessment:**
 - Habitat assessment surveys at stream restoration monitoring sites would collect water velocity, water temperature, and pebble count, accounting for large wood and overall land scape form and geomorphology data.

No new monitoring equipment would be installed and all sampling sites would be accessed via previously established access roads or paths.

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/ Luca T. De Stefanis

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/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: May 21, 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 at existing field sites associated with multiple habitat restoration or control sites consisting of flatland fields and forest adjacent to streams within a 100-mile radius of Pendleton, Umatilla County, Oregon. Township, Section and Range: ORT3NR36ESEC29.

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 would be no ground disturbing activities, thus the proposed activities would not have the potential to affect historic properties or cultural resources. All work would be carried out at existing field sites.		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No ground disturbing activities proposed, thus the proposed activities do not have the potential to affect geology and soils. All work would be carried out at existing field sites.		
3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No ground disturbing or vegetation removal activities proposed. All work would be carried out at existing sites.		
4. Wildlife (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No ground disturbing or other activity that may affect wildlife or wildlife habitat is proposed. Field crews from 1-3 people hiking with backpacks would yield avoidance or minor disturbance through human presence of walking through the woods. There would be no effect on federally or state-listed sensitive species.		

5. **Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish**

(including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)



Explanation: This project work concentrates on sampling and observational data collection. There would be no impact to adjacent waterbodies or floodplains because no ground disturbing activities are proposed. No new RM&E equipment would be installed. All work would be carried out at the existing field sites. The proposed activities are minor in disturbance to benign and would yield avoidance if species were encountered. Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7 consultation is in place for the entire CTUIR RM&E program, which includes this project, through NMFS biological opinion Consultation Number: WCR-2017-7615 issued in 2018 with no expiration date and USFWS Section 10 permit (#TE844468-12), which expires 6/23/24.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: No ground disturbing activities are proposed; thus, the action does not have the potential to impact wetlands. All work would be carried out at the existing field sites.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: No ground disturbing activities that may affect groundwater or aquifers are proposed.

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



Explanation: Access to field sites is on existing road networks and all activities would be compatible with local land use on public roads, public lands or CTUIR tribal lands.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The proposed action would not impact visual quality as the action reflects RM&E data collection. No new equipment or installation would occur.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: All work would be carried out at the existing field sites and would have no effect on air quality. Any increase in emissions from vehicles accessing field sites would be very minor and short term.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: All work would be carried out from within existing facilities or the existing field sites and would not result in an increase in ambient noise.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: All work would be carried out at existing sites. Workers carrying the proposed actions of RM&E activities 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, 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: CTUIR would implement the work at established sites that are accessed on existing roads and adjacent public lands and tribal lands. For sampling on private lands, the CTUIR has secured standing agreements for permission from private landowners to participate in the 'Biomonitoring of Fish Habitat Research' project.

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

Signed: /s/ Luca T. De Stefanis
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Date: May 21, 2020