

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Yankee Fork Bonanza Weir Temporary Trapping

**Project No.:** 2002-059-00

**Project Manager:** Jennifer Lord – EWM-4

**Location:** Custer County, Idaho

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 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 Trout Unlimited (TU) to operate a weir trap in Custer County, Idaho in order to trap and haul Federally-listed Snake River Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) and bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*). The trap would capture fish attempting to migrate past a temporary passage discontinuity at a newly-constructed stream channel within the Yankee Fork Salmon River (approximate river mile 8).

The preexisting temporary weir trap would be checked for fish and cleaned daily. Up to four adult Chinook and/or bull trout would be moved directly to each 250-gallon transport tank (filled with fresh river water with diffused oxygen at 5 l/min) and trucked approximately 1,500 feet upstream for release into a pool near the mouth of Jordan Creek. The trap and haul effort would start August 6, 2021 and continue through September 30, 2021. All locations are accessible via preexisting access routes.

These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with National Marine Fisheries Service and United States Fish and Wildlife Service on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System and Bonneville's commitments to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation under the 2020 Columbia River Fish Accord Extension agreement, while also supporting 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/ Israel Duran

Israel Duran  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Salient/CRGT

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel  
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

<u>/s/ Katey C. Grange</u>	<u>August 4, 2021</u>
Katey C. Grange	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:** Yankee Fork Bonanza Weir Temporary Trapping

## **Project Site Description**

Activities would occur at approximately river mile 8 of the Yankee Fork of the Salmon River, about 22 miles northeast of Stanley, in Custer County, Idaho on privately-owned property within the Salmon-Challis National Forest. The Yankee Fork supports a diverse array of native fishes; however, past and current land management activities (i.e., intense timber harvesting, and dredge mining) have impacted areas critical to their survival. The project site is within an area that was newly constructed in 2020. The Yankee Fork Gold Dredge is nearby and there are camping, mining, trails, other recreational activities and interests within a several mile radius.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The BPA archaeologist determined the project would have no potential to affect historic properties. The action would be limited to funding on-the-ground fish collection. No ground disturbance would occur as a result of the proposed work.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground disturbance during weir maintenance and fish transport would be temporary and minimal. No long-term adverse effects are expected.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no ESA-listed or sensitive plant species present in the project area. The project activities as described are not expected to impact plant species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area has potential to contain Yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), and North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*) habitat (USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC), 2021). However, due to past anthropological activities, these listed species and their critical habitats are not present within the project area; therefore, there would be no effect on ESA-listed species or critical habitats. Any impacts to non-listed wildlife species would be limited to the immediate site

where there would be a temporary, small decrease in available habitat and temporary elevated noise disturbance. No other special status wildlife species were identified within the project areas.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The weir would be checked daily for fish. Any target fish (ESA-listed adult Chinook or adult bull trout) would be released at an appropriate release site. Non-listed rainbow trout (*O. mykiss*), cutthroat trout (*O. clarkii*) and mountain whitefish (*Prosopium williamsoni*) may also be encountered and released. The proposed action would result in long-term positive impacts by moving adult fish past the Yankee Fork passage discontinuity so they can access habitat suitable for reproduction. The operation of the weir and hauling of salmonids is not expected to impact waterbodies or floodplains.

### Notes:

- NMFS 4(d) permit 25573 for direct take of up to 12 ESA-listed Chinook.
- Trout Unlimited secured Idaho Fish and Game permit F-35-93A-21 and would follow conditions identified in IDGF's Section 6 Cooperative agreement with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for take of listed bull trout. Trout Unlimited would submit an annual report of bull trout take to the USFWS.

## **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands at the weir location or release site.

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Groundwater and aquifers would not be impacted by the proposed actions.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no special uses for the property. Existing land use would not change as a result of the project.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minimal impact to visual quality during weir maintenance or trap and haul operations. At the conclusion of trapping efforts, the weir would be removed. There would be no long-term impacts on the visual quality of the project area.

## **10. Air Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Equipment emissions due to travel to the project and hauling fish would result in short-term impacts to air quality. These would be temporary and localized in nature and would

not have long-term impacts on air quality. Implementation of the proposed action is not expected to generate long-term or short-term violations of state air quality standards.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The maintenance of the weir and the trapping and hauling of fish would result in temporary, localized noise increases. These increases would not substantially impact the surrounding environment.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All applicable safety standards would be followed.

### **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 private landowner has been notified and approved of all activities as described.

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 August 4, 2021  
Israel Duran, ECF-4 Date  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Salient/CRGT