

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Status Creek Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) Array Installation

Project No.: 2010-030-00

Project Manager: Russell Scranton, EWP-4

Location: Yakima County, WA

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: BPA proposes to fund Yakama Confederated Tribes to install a permanent PIT tag detection array in Status Creek below the mouth of Logy Creek in south-central Washington to add precision and a backup to the existing PIT array. The in-stream PIT tag detection system (IPTDS) would consist of two separate channel-spanning rows of antennas, each approximately 40 feet (ft) across. Each row would have two individual antennas, for a total of four antennas. The rows would be spaced a minimum of 20 ft and a maximum of 80 ft apart. The antennas would consist of flat plates composed of three-inch diameter high-density polyethylene anchored to the stream bed with MR-4 ("manta ray") or duck bill anchors driven to a maximum depth of 28 inches (in) using a pneumatic jackhammer. The array would be powered by solar panels. Power and sensitive equipment would be stored in a job box which, along with the solar panels, would occupy a 10 ft by 10 ft area approximately 250 ft north of the IPDIS and about 10 ft up the south-facing river bank.

Installation would occur during low flows in the winter months (December – February) and would take approximately three to five days to complete. There would be no excavation for installation beyond manual movement of stream cobble. Power cables running from the array to the power supply would be placed on the ground surface.

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, 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/ Mandy Hope

Mandy Hope
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
ACS Professional Staffing

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

<u>/s/ Sarah T. Biegel</u>	<u>February 1, 2021</u>
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: Status Creek PIT Array Installation

Project Site Description

The project site is located on Status Creek, approximately 850 ft north-northeast of the confluence of Status Creek and Logy Creek in southern Washington, 13 miles southwest of Toppenish, on the Yakama Nation Reservation. The creek sits at about 1,100 ft above sea level (ASL). The topography is generally flat, sloping on either side of the river and topping off at about 1,500 ft ASL. The terrain of the slopes is bare. Vegetation along the riverbank is comprised of trees and shrubs.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action has been evaluated and was determined to have no potential to affect cultural resources or historic properties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The IPDIS would be anchored to the riverbed substrate, composed of cobble ranging in size from 6.4 cm – 25.6 cm. Installation of the anchors would cause minor, short-term disturbance resulting from displaced substrate and would not have a significant impact on geology and soils. The job box for the PIT tag array would sit atop the ground, resulting in no soil disturbance.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal or WA state special-status plant species are present within the project site. Streamside equipment may require minor disturbance to nearby plants that hinder installation, but no broad-scale vegetation removal is proposed.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*), and yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) have the potential to occur in the project area. The proposed action would be limited in duration, and impacts to wildlife from human presence (minor, temporary increases in noise resulting from the use of a pneumatic jackhammer to anchor the array into the channel) would be temporary; therefore, there would be no effect to ESA-listed or sensitive terrestrial wildlife species.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: ESA-listed bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), and steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) as well as steelhead critical habitat are present in Status Creek. Minor, short-term disturbance to fish may occur during IPDIS installation. No action proposed would physically alter any aquatic habitat site. There would be no adverse physical changes to water bodies, floodplains, or fish resulting from the proposed action.

Notes:

- Yakama Confederated Tribes would adhere to the terms of BPA's Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) consultation (HIP Project Notification No. 2021014) during the PIT array installation.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Based on the US Fish and Wildlife Service's National Wetlands Inventory, the project area overlaps freshwater forested/shrub wetland; however, the proposed action area and footprint are quite small. Therefore, there would be little to no impact to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action does not have the potential to impact groundwater.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not impact or change land use.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No visually prominent vegetative, landform, or structural changes would be made. The IPDIS would be placed on the river's bed, below the surface of the water. The job box would be placed on the bank of the river, but would not impact the overall visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, short-term impact to air quality from vehicle emissions during installation.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, short-term increase in ambient noise from installation equipment.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: 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 would occur on Yakama Confederated Tribes Reservation land. Landowner coordination is not needed.

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

Signed: /s/ Mandy Hope February 1, 2021
Mandy Hope, ECF-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
ACS Professional Staffing