

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: CREST PIT Array Installation

Project No.: 2010-004-00

Project Manager: Anne Creason, EWL - 4

Location: Multnomah County, OR; Pacific County, WA

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 the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce (CREST) to install Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tag arrays on state-owned land in Multnomah County, Oregon, and Pacific County, Washington, to monitor the movement of juvenile and adult salmon. The arrays would be installed at two previously restored habitat project sites -- Dairy Creek (on Sauvie Island) and Hungry Harbor (in Washington, near the Astoria/Megler Bridge).

The antennas would be encased in plastic piping and attached down to the channel substrate. Dairy Creek would have smaller diameter tubing and Hungry Harbor would have larger tubing due to salinity. A power cord would run from the antennas up to a high elevation metal job box, which would contain the data controller, batteries, and cellular modem. Another cord would run to the solar panel array.

At Dairy Creek, access would be along the existing dirt farm road that travels along the southern bank of Dairy Creek. A pickup truck with tools would drive out to the far end of the dirt road and power tools would be used to install earth anchors, which would hold the array down to the channel substrate. At Hungry Harbor access would be directly off Highway 401. A pair of antennas encased in plastic tubing would be installed just upstream of the new culvert (all within the 2020 project footprint of new channel excavation).

Funding the proposed activities fulfills commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp). These proposed activities also fulfill commitments specified in the 2020 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Columbia River System BiOp (2020 FWS CRS BiOp), 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/ Shawn Skinner

Shawn Skinner
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

August 16, 2023

Date

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

The Dairy Creek project commences at the mouth of Dairy Creek on the eastern margin of Sauvie Island on the shore of the Columbia River at River Mile 98. From the Columbia River, the creek proceeds for 1.4 km in a zig-zag pattern, progressively advancing westward to Sturgeon Lake in the center of Sauvie Island.

The Hungry Harbor project area is located in southwestern Washington, along the southwestern tip of Pacific County. The project site is located in Hungry Harbor, approximately 2.5 miles south/southwest of Knappton, Washington, and 5 river miles north of Astoria, Oregon.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA made a determination of no historic properties affected on July 12, 2023 (WA 2023 129). BPA consulted with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Washington State Department of Transportation, the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians, the Chinook Nation, and the Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe. Concurrence was received from the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (July 13, 2023). BPA did not receive concurrence from any of the other consulting parties within 30 days.

Notes:

- In the event any archaeological material is encountered during project activities, work would be stopped immediately and a BPA Archaeologist and Historian would be notified, as well as consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, short-term soil disturbance from in-stream antenna placement. All work would be done with hand tools to minimize the impact. The control 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 state special-status plant species are within the project site. Streamside equipment may require minor disturbance to nearby plants that are hindering installation, but no broad-scale vegetation removal is proposed.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions would have no effects to Federal/state special-status wildlife species. Columbian white-tailed deer (CWTD) are known to occupy areas nearby, but the proposed actions would occur outside of the CWTD fawning period and would have no effect to CWTD or their habitat.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed fish species (Chinook, coho, chum, steelhead, and bull trout) and their designated critical habitats are present in the Columbia River. No action proposed would physically alter any aquatic habitat site; there would be no adverse physical changes to water bodies, floodplains, or fish from these actions.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project impacts would be minor because the construction area and footprint are quite small and therefore, little to no impact to wetlands would occur.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed actions have no potential to impact groundwater.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions 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 PIT tag arrays would be placed on the river's bed, below the surface of the water. The control boxes 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 construction vehicles and PIT tag array installation.

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 land owned by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) and Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). All work would occur in coordination with ODFW and WSDOT. Access to Dairy Creek requires crossing a private dirt road to install the array, but nothing permanent would be installed on private land.

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

Signed: /s/ Shawn Skinner

Shawn Skinner
Environmental Protection Specialist

August 16, 2023

Date