

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Upper Columbia Stream Habitat and Geomorphic Reach Assessments Project

**Project No.:** 2009-003-00

**Project Manager:** Tori Bohlen, EWU-4

**Location:** Chelan and Okanogan Counties, Washington

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B3.16 Research activities in aquatic environments

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Yakama Nation Fisheries (YNF) to conduct stream habitat and geomorphic reach assessments in selected salmon-bearing river and stream segments within the Methow, Entiat, and Wenatchee Subbasins of central Washington. Information from the assessments would be used to inform potential aquatic-habitat restoration efforts in these Subbasins.

Reach assessments would be conducted by a survey crew consisting of a geomorphologist and two to three additional surveyors. Crews would walk stream channels to collect and measure physical habitat data follow the US Forest Service Level II Stream Inventory protocol. This protocol employs a habitat unit survey along with general characterizations of substrate, large woody debris, and riparian conditions. There would be no disturbance to the stream bed or riparian vegetation. Crews would access assessment sites by walking overland from the nearest existing public road. All work would occur during the spring, summer and fall of 2024.

The proposed reach assessments would occur at the following locations:

<b>Subbasin</b>	<b>Reach</b>	<b>River Miles</b>
Entiat	Grey / Stormy / Preston	16 – 23
Methow	Big Valley and M2 (Weeman to Twisp)	41 - 62.5
Wenatchee	Icicle	0 – 21
Wenatchee	White River	0 – 15
Wenatchee	Chiwaukum Creek	0 – 3
Wenatchee	Nason Creek	0 - 16

Funding the proposed activities would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with both NMFS and USFWS on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System, while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System 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.

Brenda Aguirre  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange  
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:** Upper Columbia Stream Habitat and Geomorphic Reach Assessments Project

## **Project Site Description**

All activities would occur within the Methow, Entiat, and Wenatchee Subbasins of the Columbia River Basin in north-central Washington. The Subbasins consists of mountainous terrain and forested vegetation with interspersed grasslands and meadows. The US Forest Service manages a majority of the subbasin, while the remainder is state and privately owned. Land use activities in the subbasin include timber harvest, recreation, agriculture, and rural residential.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed work would occur in-stream and on dry land. Work would not involve ground disturbance or removal of vegetation. There would be little to no potential to impact historical or cultural resources.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed work would occur in-stream and on dry land. Work would not involve ground disturbance or removal of vegetation. There would be little to no potential to impact geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed work would occur in-stream and on dry land. Work would not involve ground disturbance or removal of vegetation. Plants in the immediate vicinity of each assessment area would be subject to minimal, short-term impacts as a result of trampling by overland foot traffic to reach the assessment sites. This would not be expected to have long-term impacts to plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), marbled murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) and northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*) and its critical habitat have the potential to occur in the assessment areas. Any potential impacts to ESA-listed species would be minimized by following the measures outlined in BPA's ESA Section 7 consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) activities in the Columbia

Basin (HIP PNF 2024042). Any impacts to non-listed wildlife species at the assessment sites would be limited to the immediate area, where there would be a temporary, small decrease in available habitat and temporary elevated noise disturbance.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed work would result in temporary low level turbidity in water bodies from in-stream foot traffic. There would be no net rise in floodplain elevations. ESA-listed Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), steelhead (*O. mykiss*), and bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) and their critical habitat have the potential to occur in the assessment areas. Any potential impacts to ESA-listed species or their habitats at the assessment sites would be minimized by following the measures outlined in BPA's ESA Section 7 consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service for the Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) activities in the Columbia Basin (HIP PNF 2024042). Any impacts to non-listed fish species at the assessment sites would be limited to the immediate area, where there would be a temporary, small decrease in available habitat.

## **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed work would occur in-stream and on dry land. Work would not involve ground disturbance or removal of vegetation. There would be little to no potential to impact wetlands.

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance that would reach groundwater is proposed.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Land use would not change as a result of the proposed work.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Visual quality would not change as a result of the proposed work.

## **10. Air Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary generation of dust and emissions associated with vehicle travel to and from assessments sites would occur.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary noise increases associated with vehicle travel to and from assessment sites would occur.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All personnel would use best management practices to protect worker health and safety.

### 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: No notification - All proposed work would occur 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:

Brenda Aguirre  
Environmental Protection Specialist