

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Fish Passage Center – Fishway Inspections at Columbia and Snake River Dams

**Project No.:** 1994-033-00

**Project Manager:** Tracy Hauser, EWL-4

**Location:** Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Kittitas, Klickitat, Skamania, Walla Walla, Whitman, and Yakima counties, Washington

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B3.3 – Research related to conservation of fish, wildlife, and cultural resources

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to provide funds to the Fish Passage Center (FPC) along with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), and Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) for fishway inspections at Columbia and Snake River Dams in Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Kittitas, Klickitat, Skamania, Walla Walla, Whitman and Yakima counties, Washington.

Fieldwork for these fishway inspections would occur between the spring and fall of each year. Methods would consist of walking the area surrounding the fishways by foot and inspecting them visually to compare water levels, head gauges, and gauge readings. No work would occur in-water or include any excavation practices that would impact waters of the U.S. or wetland areas.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills ongoing commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp) and commitments specified in the 2020 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (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/ Travis D. Kessler

Travis D. Kessler  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Salient CRGT, Inc.

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel  
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel                      October 1, 2020

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:** Fish Passage Center - Fishway Inspections at Columbia and Snake River Dams

## **Project Site Description**

The proposed fishway inspections would occur at Columbia and Snake River dams in Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Kittitas, Klickitat, Skamania, Walla Walla, Whitman and Yakima counties, Washington. Site conditions would vary depending on the location, but would generally occur along various fishways attached to dams that exist within portions of the Columbia and Snake Rivers.

## **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 fishway inspection fieldwork. No ground disturbance would occur as a result of the proposed work.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to geology and soils would occur as there would be no ground disturbance associated with the inspection of fishways.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no impacts to ESA-listed, state-listed, sensitive or non-listed plant species known to exist on the sites as there would be no ground disturbance associated with the proposed project.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed, state-listed, sensitive wildlife species, or designated critical habitat would be affected by the project as there is no ground disturbance proposed.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no ground disturbance or in-water work proposed as a result of the visual fishway inspections. Therefore, there would be no impact to waterbodies, floodplains, ESA-listed, state-listed, non-listed, special-status species, ESUs, or habitats as a result of the proposed project.

## **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to wetlands would occur as a result of the proposed fishway inspections as there would be no ground disturbance proposed.

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no ground disturbance as a result of the proposed fishway inspections. Therefore, the work would not affect groundwater or aquifers.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use would occur for the proposed project. The project would consist of fishway inspections at various fishways along Columbia and Snake River Dams.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed fishway inspections would have no effect on visual quality. Any change to the viewshed due to field vehicles would be short term and temporary.

## **10. Air Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A temporary increase in emissions and dust from vehicles accessing the field sites during fishway inspections would be very minor and short term, and would resume to normal conditions immediately once fieldwork is completed.

## **11. Noise**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed fishway inspections would not result in an increase in ambient noise as they are visual inspections that would be completed on the ground.

## **12. Human Health and Safety**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed fishway inspection work is not considered hazardous nor does it result in any health or safety risks to the general public. There would be no soil contamination or hazardous conditions, no CERCLA sites, and no changes to electric or magnetic fields as a result of the proposed project.

### **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 Fish Passage Center would notify dam operators prior to the commencement of the proposed fishway inspections, which occur in areas where previous work has been completed.

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

Signed: /s/ Travis D. Kessler October 1, 2020  
Travis D. Kessler, ECF-4 Date  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Salient CRGT, Inc.