

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Escapement and Productivity of Spring Chinook and Steelhead

**Project No.:** 1998-016-00

**Project Manager:** Joshua Ashline EWL-4

**Location:** Grant, Gilliam, Sherman, Umatilla, and Wheeler counties, Oregon

**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 proposes to fund the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to annually monitor Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) and federally-listed steelhead (*O. mykiss*) populations within the John Day Basin. This project would operate and maintain up to 11 passive integrated transponder (PIT) arrays and five rotary screw traps; trap (via rotating screw traps, seining, and electrofishing) and PIT tag approximately 4,000 spring Chinook and 7,000 steelhead; and conduct surveys, such as electrofishing, seining, redd counts, and site assessments (e.g. pebble counts, elevation surveys, etc.).

These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with National Marine Fisheries 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/ Israel Duran

Israel Duran  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Salient/CRGT

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel  
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel                      August 12, 2021

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:** Escapement and Productivity of Spring Chinook and Steelhead

## **Project Site Description**

All activities would occur at existing collection sites within the Deschutes River subbasin in Grant, Gilliam, Umatilla, and Wheeler counties, Oregon.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no ground-disturbing activities and no work involving historic structures; thus, the proposed activities would not have the potential to affect historic properties or cultural resources. If any new ground disturbance is proposed outside of disturbed areas, a cultural resource consultation would be initiated.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing activities proposed; thus, the proposed activities do not have the potential to affect geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions do not include any vegetation management, ground disturbance, or work that would significantly impact vegetation. Therefore, there is no potential to affect plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Personnel may displace wildlife during surveys, but this would be temporary. There would be no actions that would occur on upland areas; therefore, there is no potential to affect wildlife or wildlife habitat.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Chinook and ESA-listed steelhead would be monitored and trapped via rotating screw traps, electrofishing, and seines and PIT tagged. Other fish encountered during trapping would likely be bass, pikeminnow, suckers, and sculpins. All fish species would be fin clipped, and pikeminnow and bass would also be PIT tagged. The area where activities would occur is not suitable for bull trout and they have not been captured in the past. No other ESA-listed fishes are present in project area. Waterbodies and floodplains would not be affected by the actions.

- ODFW has acquired and would follow conditions set forth under National Marine Fisheries Service's 4(d) permits (24283, 24285, and 24288) for the take of steelhead.
- ODFW has a Sec 6 agreement with the US Fish and Wildlife Service for the incidental take of bull trout.

## 6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing activities are proposed; thus, the action does not have the potential to impact wetlands.

## 7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing activities are proposed; thus, the action does not have the potential to impact groundwater or aquifers.

## 8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Access to field sites is on existing road networks and all activities are compatible with local land use.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: This project would use rotary screw traps that may be visible to recreational users. The traps would be removed upon completion of the spring run and the visual quality of those sites would not be permanently impacted. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact visual quality.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Any increase in emissions from vehicles accessing sampling sites would be very minor and short term.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be carried out from within existing sampling sites and would not result in an increase in ambient noise.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Personnel are trained in proper equipment management technique, and all applicable safety regulations would be followed. This activity is not considered hazardous nor does it result in any health or safety risks to the general public.

### 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 actions are proposed by the ODFW to be implemented by ODFW staff on private and public properties (ODFW, Bureau of Land Management, Malheur, Ochoco, and Umatilla National Forests), and would coordinate activities with the underlying land manager.

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 12, 2021  
Israel Duran, ECF-4 Date  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Salient/CRGT