Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: PLCI Citizen Science Lamprey Monitoring

Project No.: 2017-005-00 (Contract Number CR-356661)

Project Manager: Siena M. Lopez-Johnston, EWM-4

Location: Marion, Polk, and Washington counties, Oregon

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: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative (PLCI), a cooperative effort among agencies and tribes to achieve long-term persistence of Pacific lamprey (*Entosphenus tridentatus*) and support traditional tribal cultural use throughout the Columbia River Basin. Funding supports ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System on fish and wildlife in the main stem 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.).

With funding from BPA under the PLCI, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) would develop and implement a citizen science monitoring program to document the distribution of Pacific lamprey in the Tualatin River Basin near Hillsboro, Washington County, Oregon and in tributaries of the Willamette River near Salem, Marion, and Polk counties, Oregon. With the help of students and other volunteers, ODFW would anchor leaf packs and/or hay bales to the streambed using stakes. After two to three weeks, the packs and bales would be removed and searched for larval lamprey. ODFW would likely sample following lamprey-specific electrofishing techniques. Collected lamprey would be counted, measured, and returned to the stream unharmed. A subset of lampreys would be retained for identification to species. Environmental data would be collected to characterize the habitat, including latitude/longitude, substrate size and type, water temperature, depth, flow, dissolved oxygen, conductivity, and pH.

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/ W. Walker Stinnette
W. Walker Stinnette
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient CRGT

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad J. Hamel
Chad J. Hamel, ECF-4
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel *March 15, 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.

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Project Site Description

Larval Pacific lamprey sampling and habitat characterizations would occur at multiple field sites in the Tualatin River Basin near Hillsboro, Washington County, Oregon and in tributaries of the Willamette River near Salem, Marion, and Polk counties, Oregon. The exact number and locations of sample sites remain to be determined, depending on stream accessibility and the opportunity to fill gaps in lamprey distribution data.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project (lamprey sampling using leaf packs, hay bales, and/or electrofishing and habitat characterization) would not require any ground disturbance that could potentially impact archaeological resources. No modifications to existing built historic resources are proposed. Therefore, the proposed undertaking would have no potential to cause effects to historic properties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Lamprey sampling and habitat characterizations would not require ground disturbance. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Lamprey sampling and habitat characterizations would not require ground disturbance and would not require any tree or vegetation removal or management. The project would not result in adverse modification to suitable protected plant habitats. Therefore, the proposed project would have no effect on protected plant species or habitats.

Notes:

- To prevent the spread of noxious weeds, only certified weed-free hay bales would be used.
- Leaf packs would be created using native leaves gathered onsite.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary disturbance of normal wildlife behavior could occur from elevated noise and human presence at sample sites. However, proposed activities would be temporary (less than one day at each site) and largely consistent with human activities and natural processes typically occurring at the sites. Wildlife species that could be present in the area would likely be habituated to this level of human activity. The project would not result in adverse modification to suitable protected species habitat. Therefore, the proposed project would have no effect on protected wildlife species or habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Lamprey sampling and in-water data collection would disturb streambed sediment, which would temporarily increase turbidity. Following completion of the proposed activities, suspended sediments would resettle on the streambed, and turbidity would quickly return to pre-existing conditions. Therefore, the proposed project would have no long-term impact on water bodies and would not require any ground disturbance that would impact floodplains.

Leaf packs and hay bales are a passive, non-lethal method of sampling larval lamprey. The packs and bales are intended to mimic natural stream features and processes, and their installation and removal would have no effect on protected fish species or habitats. Sampling with lamprey-specific electrofishing techniques (i.e., operating at minimal voltage necessary to effectively target lamprey while not harming protected fish) has been shown to have no effect on protected fish. In addition, larval lamprey habitats are shallow, depositional areas, where non-target species can be seen and avoided. Therefore, the proposed project would have no effect on protected species or habitats.

Notes:

- Electrofishing sessions would start with all settings (voltage, pulse width, and pulse rate) set to the minimums needed to capture lamprey.
- Researchers would conduct a careful visual survey of the area to be sampled before beginning electrofishing to determine if any fish are present.
- Electrofishing would not occur in turbid water where visibility is poor (i.e., unable to see the bed of the stream).

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some proposed activities could take place within or near wetlands. However, lamprey sampling and habitat characterizations would not require ground disturbance and would not require any tree or vegetation removal or management. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Lamprey sampling and habitat characterizations would not require ground disturbance. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact groundwater and aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Lamprey sampling and habitat characterizations would not require a change in land use and would not impact specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Lamprey sampling and habitat characterizations would not impact visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary and minor dust and vehicle emissions would increase in the local area from transporting volunteers and equipment to the sample sites. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the project.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary and minor noise from vehicle and equipment use and human presence would occur during daylight hours. However, these actions would be consistent with human activities and natural processes typically occurring at the sites. There would be no long-term change in ambient noise.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Individuals carrying out proposed project activities would be trained in proper techniques and equipment use. The project would not generate or use hazardous materials. Therefore, the proposed project would not be expected to impact human 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 landowner notification, involvement, or coordination would be required as all sample sites would likely be accessed via existing roads and public lands. ODFW would be responsible for coordinating site access with private landowners, if applicable.

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

Signed: */s/ W. Walker Stinnettte* *March 15, 2021*

W. Walker Stinnette, EC-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient CRGT