

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Minam PIT Tag Array Installation

**Project No.:** 1998-007-02

**Project Manager:** Maureen Kavanagh, EWP-4

**Location:** Wallowa County, 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:** BPA proposes to fund the Nez Perce Tribe's installation and operation of a new Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tag array on the north bank of the Minam River about 0.5 kilometers upstream of the confluence of the Minam and Wallowa Rivers in Wallowa County, Oregon. Installation of the new PIT tag array would further aid the Nez Perce Tribe Department of Fisheries Resources Management Research Division and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife in the monitoring and evaluation of stocks of Chinook, steelhead, and newly reintroduced coho in the Grand Ronde Basin.

Installation would include the addition of streamside equipment that consists of a heavy-duty lockable metal 30 x 36 x 12-inch enclosure that houses electronics, a 36 x 36 x 12-inch thermoelectric generator and a 200 gallon propane tank located adjacent to the enclosure to provide fuel for the on-site generator. The metal enclosure would be mounted on a 3 inch steel pole anchored to a hand buried 12 x 12 x 30-inch deep concrete pad and suspended 36 to 48 inches above ground. The thermoelectric generator would be mounted to a four legged stand secured by duckbills and suspended 36 to 48 inches above ground. An area of approximately 8 x 4 feet would need to be cleared of vegetation and leveled by hand to accommodate the propane tank. Minimal ground leveling and clearing of vegetation would be required to secure streamside components. The PIT array would include ten antennas, each 20 feet long, 3 feet wide, and 5 inches deep. The HDPE antennas would be installed by hand in two shallow stream-bed trenches each about 100 feet long, 3 feet wide, and 6 inches deep. The antennas would be held in place by seven duckbill anchors per antenna along the upstream and downstream edges. The installed antennas would be flush with the existing stream substrate. A mounting structure would be anchored to the streambed using duckbill anchors driven up to 40 inches into the substrate. Hand excavating the stream-bed trench would result in some temporary and localized suspended fine sediment up to 20 feet downstream of the trench site. It is expected that the plume would be narrow (less than 5 feet) and the sediment volume would quickly settle to the bottom or become dispersed.

The Minam PIT array is expected to last up to 20 years with expected annual maintenance for cleaning the fuel filters and lines. The antennas would remain in their stream-bed trench and may require periodic maintenance with little if any instream or streamside disturbance expected. Staff would visit the site weekly to monitor the equipment and retrieve data. Access to the site during construction and maintenance would be via foot and would utilize an existing foot path maintained by Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

**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/ Claire McClory  
Claire McClory  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel  
Sarah T. Biegel  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: May 31, 2019

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:** Minam PIT Tag Array Installation

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## Project Site Description

The project is located on the north bank of the Minam River, immediately adjacent to Highway 82 and a large vehicle pull out area. The project area is within the Minam River floodplain and is dominated by riparian vegetation with some ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir.

## Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. <b>Historic and Cultural Resources</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> BPA recommended that a Nez Perce Tribal archaeologist be present during ground-disturbing activities, and made a determination of No Historic Properties Affected on February 5, 2019. Oregon SHPO, and the Colville and Nez Perce Tribes concurred with BPA's determination. No response was received from other consulting parties.		
2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Some compaction and surface disturbance is expected during streambank equipment installation. An area of approximately 8 x 4-feet would be cleared of vegetation and leveled by hand to accommodate the propane tank. Minimal ground leveling and clearing of vegetation would be required to secure the other streamside components. Minor impact expected to stream substrate during antenna installation from shallow trenching. Use of hand tools to trench for antenna placements would minimize disturbance. Soil disturbance would be temporary and localized.		
3. <b>Plants</b> (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Some minor riparian vegetation removal would be needed to install the streamside equipment. No Federal or state special-status species present.		
4. <b>Wildlife</b> (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No terrestrial Federal or state-listed special-status wildlife species present.		

5. **Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish**

(including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)

Explanation: Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed Chinook, steelhead, and bull trout are present within the project area. Bull trout and steelhead critical habitat is also present within the stretch of stream. All work would occur within the approved in-water work window of July 1 to August 15. Hand excavating the stream bed trench would result in some temporary and localized suspended fine sediment up to 20 feet downstream of the trench site. It is expected that the plume would be narrow (less than 5 feet) and the sediment volume would quickly settle to the bottom or become dispersed. The project has been covered using BPA's Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) ESA programmatic consultation. The project can be referenced under Project Notification Form number 2019062.

- To meet the terms of BPA's HIP Programmatic, site-specific HIP Conservation Measures have been provided to the project Sponsor and would be adhered to during construction activities.
- A Project Completion Form (PCF) would be submitted to the BPA environmental lead within 30 days of construction completion.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: No wetlands present.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: No impact expected.

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

Explanation: The project area is owned by Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation and is within the Minam River Scenic Waterway. The Nez Perce Tribe Department of Fisheries Resource Management received permission to install the PIT array on November 21, 2018 (Oregon State Parks [OSP] Commission approval number 66-92-18). Streamside equipment installation would have no impact on surrounding land use and would result in negligible impact to the Minam River Scenic Waterway.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: The PIT array is located within the Minam River Scenic Waterway. The OSP Commission notification described above specifies that minimal vegetation be removed and replanting take place if deemed appropriate upon post-construction inspection. In addition, the streambank metal enclosure and propane tank would be painted and screened to visually integrate with surrounding vegetation. The OSP Scientific Research Permit (#035-18) specifies that the PIT array be clearly marked to alert anyone recreating in the area of any potential hazards. No to low visual impact to Minam Scenic Waterway expected.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: Temporary dust and vehicle emissions during construction.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: Temporary noise during construction.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: No impact expected.

**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, if necessary:

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

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### **Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Description: The underlying property is owned by Oregon State Parks (OSP). The Nez Perce Tribe acquired a Scientific Research Permit (#035-18) and permission from the OSP Commission to engage in regulated activities within the Oregon scenic waterway system (notification #66-92-18).

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

Signed: /s/ Claire McClory  
Claire McClory ECF-4  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: May 31, 2019