

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Survival & Migration of Upper Salmon Chinook Research Project

Project No.: 2008-906-00

Project Manager: Jenny Lord, EWM-4

Location: Custer and Valley Counties, Idaho

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 fund the Shoshone-Bannock tribes to conduct a variety of monitoring and evaluation activities in the East Fork Salmon River, including operation juvenile screw traps, adult collection at weirs, and redd surveys in order to monitor spring Chinook abundance.

A juvenile screw trap on the East Fork Salmon River would be operated to estimate the number of Chinook salmon fry, parr, pre-smolt, and smolts annually emigrating. This data would be used to estimate and compare the annual variability in broodyear production. Fish collected at the screw trap would be tagged or marked so that they could be detected at both juvenile and adult monitoring facilities in the Columbia River.

Biological information (length, sex, DNA, marks/tags) would be collected from Chinook salmon adults using a weir on the East Fork Salmon River. After processing, adults would be released upstream for natural spawning.

Redd counts and carcass surveys would be utilized to estimate adult escapement. Redd locations and the number of live fish and their origin (hatchery or natural) would be documented during each survey.

No new monitoring sites would be established and all sites would be accessed via existing access roads and trails.

Funding for the proposed activities would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with NMFS on the O&M of the Columbia River System (CRS) and Bonneville's commitments to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes under the 2020 Amendment to the 2018 Columbia River Fish Accord Extension agreement, while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the CRS 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/ Ted Gresh

Ted Gresh
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange November 4, 2020

Katey C. Grange 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

The East Fork Salmon River is a 34-mile (55 km) tributary of the Salmon River, flowing through Custer and Valley Counties, Idaho. The East Fork Salmon River is formed at the confluence of the West Fork East Fork Salmon River and the South Fork East Fork Salmon River between the Boulder and White Cloud mountains in Sawtooth National Recreation Area.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA has determined the proposed activities would have no potential to cause effects to historic properties. The proposed activities would not result in ground disturbance that could potentially impact archaeological resources. No modifications to existing historically built resources are proposed.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance would occur as a result of the proposed project. Therefore, there would be no impact to geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would not require any tree or vegetation removal and so would not result in any effects to vegetation.

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 human presence at the collection and monitoring sites. Wildlife species that could be present in the area would likely be temporarily affected.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be brief physical handling of all captured fishes to take their length and weight. There would be no impact to adjacent waterbodies or floodplains because no ground-disturbing activities are proposed. ESA coverage for handling ESA-listed fish salmonids has been secured through Section-10 scientific collection permit (1127-5R) issued by National Marine Fisheries Service. Incidental take of ESA listed bull trout is covered through a Section 6 cooperative agreement with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

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 that may affect groundwater or aquifers are proposed.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Access to field sites is on existing road networks and all activities would be compatible with local land use on public roads and public lands.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new equipment or installation would occur and the proposed actions would not impact visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be carried out at the existing field sites and would have no effect on air quality. Any increase in emissions from vehicles accessing field sites would be very minor and short term.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: None of the proposed activities would result in an increase in ambient noise.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Workers carrying the proposed actions of RM&E activities are trained in proper equipment management techniques. 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 Shoshone-Bannock Tribe would implement the work at established sites that are accessed on existing roads and adjacent public lands.

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

Signed: /s/ Ted Gresh November 4, 2020
Ted Gresh, ECF-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist