

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: PIT Tagging Wild Chinook (*update to CX issued on 12/14/2021*)

Project No.: 1991-028-00

Project Manager: Deborah Docherty- EWM-4

Location: Custer, Idaho, Lemhi, and Valley counties, Idaho; Columbia and Whitman 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 fund the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to assess the migrational characteristics and estimate parr-to-smolt survival for Snake River wild spring/summer Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) at Lower Granite Dam; characterize parr and smolt survival and movement out of natal rearing areas of selected streams; and examine the relationships among fish movement, environmental conditions within the streams, weather, and climate data. This CX has been updated to reflect that the actions presented also support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with US Fish and Wildlife Service.

The proposed actions would include:

1. Collection (via seining or electrofishing) and tagging of wild Snake River spring/summer Chinook juveniles
2. Data collection, including but not limited to: installing stream gauges and PIT tag arrays; conducting snorkel surveys; conducting aerial surveys (e.g. drones, airplanes, helicopter); conducting site assessments (e.g. pebble counts, elevation surveys); carcass surveys; redd counts; ongoing data collection)

Funding the proposed activities fulfills commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp). These proposed activities also fulfill commitments specified in the 2020 US Fish and Wildlife Service Columbia River System BiOp (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/ 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 January 28, 2022

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: PIT Tagging Wild Chinook

Project Site Description

All activities would occur within the Lower Snake River and Salmon River subbasins in Idaho and Washington.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is no ground disturbance planned and there would be no impacts to historic or cultural resources as a result of these actions.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is no ground disturbance planned; therefore, geology and soils would not be impacted by the proposed activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Spalding's Catchfly (*Silene spaldingii*) and MacFarlane's four-o'clock (*Mirabilis macfarlanei*) are listed as threatened in Idaho County, Idaho, but there are no documented sightings or history of prior occurrence for these species in the project areas. Spalding's Catchfly is also listed as threatened in Columbia County, Washington, but there are no documented sightings or history of prior occurrence for this species in the project areas. The Whitebark Pine (*Pinus albicaulis*) is listed as a Candidate species in Lemhi County, Idaho. There are no known occurrences of Whitebark Pine in the project area; and therefore, no effect to Whitebark Pine is anticipated from project activities. While there may be minor impacts to plant species during activities, there are no other listed or other special-status species within the immediate area of impact.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Canada Lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) is listed as threatened in Valley County, Idaho and Columbia County, Washington, but suitable habitat is not located within or near the project sites. Northern Idaho Ground Squirrel (*Urocitellus brunneus*) is listed as threatened in Valley County, Idaho, but suitable habitat is not located within or near the project sites. The yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*) is listed as threatened in Lemhi County and

Columbia County, Washington. There are no documented sightings or history of prior occurrence for this species in the project areas, and; therefore, no effect to yellow-billed cuckoo is expected. Grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*) are listed as threatened in Lemhi County, Idaho. There are no documented sightings or history of prior occurrence for this species in the project area, and; therefore, no effect to grizzlies are anticipated from project activities. The gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) is listed as recovered, but suitable habitat is not located within or near the project sites. No other listed or special-status species are known to be within the project areas. The project activities may temporarily impact other wildlife due to human presence within the project areas.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: NMFS' Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) has a Section 10 Scientific Research Permit 13381 - 3R for take of ESA-listed Chinook and incidental take of ESA-listed steelhead trout (*O. mykiss*); Authorized by Idaho Fish and Game under Section 6 (Permit # F-31-88-20) for potential impacts to bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*). Non-listed fish may be temporarily disturbed due to project activities. There is no ground disturbance planned; activities would not impact or change waterbodies or floodplains.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is no ground disturbance planned; activities would not impact or change wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is no ground disturbance planned; activities would not impact or change groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The activities would not impact or change land use.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The activities would not impact or change visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The work would not impact air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Noise levels may be increased, but this would only occur during the normal working hours of the study period.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Safety regulations would be followed as necessary.

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: This work would be implemented at existing facilities or on public lands. NMFS would coordinate sampling and data collection occurring on public lands 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 January 28, 2022
Israel Duran, ECF-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient/CRGT