

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Umatilla Juvenile Outmigration Monitoring and Evaluation Program Funding

**Project No.:** 1989-024-01

**Project Manager:** Tracy Hauser

**Location:** Three Mile Falls Dam, Umatilla 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 Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) to implement activities under the existing Umatilla Juvenile Outmigration Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) program. The program involves long-term smolt monitoring activities and implementation of redd surveys for the ESA-listed Umatilla River steelhead population. The M&E activities would include smolt trapping, red surveys, and PIT tagging as described below.

## ***Smolt Trapping***

Smolt outmigration estimates are necessary to separate the freshwater and ocean portions of anadromous salmonid life history. Estimates of outmigrant abundance allow evaluation of trends in habitat productivity, without the masking influence of Columbia River migratory and ocean survival conditions. Outmigrant estimates also allow estimates of freshwater survival (e.g. egg to smolt survival) and productivity (e.g. smolts/adult or smolts/redd) when combined with additional monitoring efforts. Smolt trapping will be conducted at Three Mile Falls Dam and Birch Creek to determine annual smolt yield and document inter-annual variation in life history characteristics (i.e. emigration timing & size) for the Middle Columbia River Distinct Population Segment (DPS) Umatilla River steelhead Major Population Group (MPG).

## ***Redd Surveys***

Conduct steelhead redd surveys for the Middle Columbia River DPS Umatilla River steelhead MPG using standard ODFW methods and a GRTS sampling design. Redd data will be used to determine the spatial distribution of spawning steelhead and to monitor inter-annual variation in redd density.

## ***PIT Tagging***

PIT tag up to 4,400 natural summer steelhead at downstream migrant traps in Birch Creek and at Three Mile Falls Dam to estimate annual smolt yield, life-stage specific survival, and migration timing for the Middle Columbia River DPS Umatilla River steelhead MPG. Fish will be PIT tagged according to standards outlined in the PIT Tag Marking Procedures Manual.

**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, July 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/ Elisabeth Bowers

Elisabeth Bowers  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
ACS Professional Staffing

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel  
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason

Stacy L. Mason  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: August 21, 2018

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

Smolt trapping and PIT tagging will take place at an inclined plane trap in the juvenile bypass facility within the West Extension Canal at Three Mile Falls Dam in and a 5-foot rotary screw trap near the mouth of Birch Creek located in Umatilla County, Oregon. Steelhead redd surveys will be conducted at a minimum of 25 sites within the Umatilla River Basin and will be visited on a bi-weekly basis throughout the season.

### 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> There will be no ground disturbance or construction, only data collection at existing facilities; therefore, there is no potential to impact historic and cultural resources.		
2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Earth disturbance will be minimal, limited to minor sedimentation when walking in rivers or streams. Therefore, geology and soils will not be impacted.		
3. <b>Plants</b> (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> The project would not remove or disturb vegetation. Therefore, no effects on plants are anticipated.		
4. <b>Wildlife</b> (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> The project would increase noise and visual disturbance only minimally above ambient levels. The project will not be using heavy construction equipment and will not disturb earth or vegetation. Therefore, negligible effects on wildlife are anticipated.		
5. <b>Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish</b> (including federal/state special-status species and ESUs)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Potential affects to Middle Columbia River steelhead and bull trout due to trapping and M&E activities are addressed in existing Biological Opinions. Take of Middle Columbia steelhead is covered by the 2016 Reinitiated Consultation Biological Opinion (WCR-2010-06511) for the Umatilla River spring Chinook salmon, fall Chinook salmon, and coho salmon hatchery programs issued August 19, 2016. A Biological Opinion (WCR-2017-7615) for the Middle Columbia River steelhead and spring Chinook salmon hatchery programs was finalized in February 13, 2018 and covers 4(d) take of steelhead for the program and documents that the action is not likely to jeopardize Middle Columbia River steelhead. Data from 2012 to 2017 shows that there were only 4 mortalities of natural-origin Middle Columbia steelhead as a result of the operation of the Three Mile Falls Dam trap. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife has Section 6 coverage for impacts to bull trout. Very few bull trout have been observed in the trap in past years. If the project continues to meet the terms and conditions set forth in the		

biological opinions and the Section 6 authorization, effects to steelhead and bull trout are not anticipated to be significant.

Smolt trapping, PIT tagging, and conducting redd surveys are not anticipated to have any effect to the floodplains or waterbodies within the Umatilla River Basin, as no ground disturbance or channel modifications are proposed. Temporary, localized sediment/substrate disturbance may be caused by walking through streams during the redd surveys, but this effect is not anticipated to be significant.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: None known to be present but the project would not disturb wetlands; therefore, no effect on wetlands.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: The action would not result in an increase in groundwater use. The work would not change the hydrological regime and therefore would not affect groundwater recharge.

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

Explanation: Land use would not change. The project is not located in a specially designated area or Wild and Scenic River.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: The project is not anticipated to have any impact to visual quality since project activities will occur at existing facilities. Redd surveys will occur in various locations within the Umatilla River Basin but there will be no lasting visual impact related to the surveys.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: A negligible amount of temporary dust and vehicle emissions could be generated during the work.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: The action does not involve any new construction or new use of heavy equipment. Therefore, there would be only negligible increase in ambient noise.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: The work is not likely to mobilize previously undisturbed soils. Therefore, the action would not uncover contaminated earth, mobilize fuel or chemical leaks, or disturb underground storage tanks.

### 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: Where projects are on public land, work is done in coordination with land managers. On private land, ODFW would access project areas or perform work only after obtaining landowner approval.

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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/ Elisabeth Bowers

Elisabeth Bowers

Contract Environmental Protection Specialist

ACS Professional Staffing

Date: August 21, 2018