

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Viable Salmonid Population (VSP) Estimates for the Yakima River Steelhead Major Population Group (MPG) Project

**Project No.:** 2010-030-00

**Project Manager:** Russell Scranton

**Location:** Yakima River Basin

**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 this project to provide viable salmonid population (VSP) estimates for steelhead within the Yakima River Basin. This project was developed to expand Research, Monitoring, & Evaluation (RM&E) activities conducted by the Yakama Nation and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) to better evaluate VSP parameters (abundance, productivity, spatial structure, and diversity) for Yakima River steelhead populations. Data from this project is used to evaluate population status and trends, inform National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) status reviews and implementation of the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) Biological Opinion, and address critical uncertainties. The improved understanding of steelhead population performance produced by this project provides long-term status and trends monitoring data for the Yakima River Steelhead Major Population Group (MPG) populations, and directly informs efforts to recover steelhead populations in the Yakima River Basin.

Specific activities proposed to be funded by BPA include:

1. PIT tag array installation, operation, and maintenance
2. Biological and DNA sampling at the Prosser adult monitoring facility
3. PIT-tagging of adult steelhead at the Prosser Dam denil trap
4. Electrofishing and PIT tagging of juvenile steelhead within the Naches River and tributaries by the Yakama Nation
5. Electrofishing and PIT tagging of steelhead within the Yakima River and select tributaries by WDFW

**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 K. Bowers

Elisabeth K. Bowers  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
ACS Professional Staffing

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel  
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel  
NEPA Compliance Office

Date: September 11, 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.

**Proposed Action:** Viable Salmonid Population (VSP) Estimates for the Yakima River Steelhead Major Population Group (MPG) Project

---

## Project Site Description

Adult steelhead are captured and PIT-tagged at the Prosser Dam denil trap within the right bank fish ladder which is operated from early September to June to sample steelhead across the migration period. Biological data collected at the Prosser Dam trap include, but are not limited to: fork length, weight, age (scales), sex, and DNA. Electrofishing and PIT tagging of juvenile steelhead by the Yakama Nation would occur within the Naches River and tributaries. Electrofishing and PIT tagging of steelhead by WDFW would occur within the mainstem Yakima River and select tributaries. PIT tag array installation, operation, and maintenance would take place across the Yakima River Basin by the Yakama Nation.

## 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 would 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 would be minimal and limited to minor sedimentation when walking in rivers or streams. Therefore, geology and soils would 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 proposed actions would increase noise and visual disturbance only minimally above ambient levels. The project would not be using heavy construction equipment and would not disturb earth or vegetation. Therefore, negligible effects on wildlife are anticipated.		

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

Explanation: Effects to the Middle Columbia River steelhead DPS are covered under the Yakima River Spring Chinook Salmon, Summer/Fall Chinook Salmon, and Coho Salmon Hatchery Programs Biological Opinion dated November 25, 2013 (NWR-2011-0609), which expires July 15, 2023. Effects to bull trout are covered by a Section 10 permit (TE-05166B-0) which expires in March 2019. The Section 7 consultation for effects to bull trout as a result of this program is in the process of being reinitiated.

Electrofishing and PIT tagging are not anticipated to have any effect to the floodplains or waterbodies within the Yakima 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 electrofishing activities, 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 would occur at existing facilities. Electrofishing would occur in various locations within the Yakima River Basin but there would 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 proposed actions do 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:

---

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

Description: Where projects are on public land (e.g., Wenatchee National Forest), work is done in coordination with land managers (e.g., USFS, DNR, WDFW, etc). On private land, WDFW and the Yakama Nation would access project areas or perform work only after obtaining landowner approval.

---

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

Signed: /s/ Elisabeth K. Bowers  
Elisabeth K. Bowers, ECF-4  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
ACS Professional Staffing

Date: September 11, 2018