

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: PIT Tag Array Installations at Dead Canyon Creek and Trout Creek

Project No.: 1995-063-35

Project Manager: Victoria Bohlen, EWU-4

Location: Klickitat County, 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: BPA proposes to fund installation of two Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tag arrays within Dead Canyon Creek and Trout Creek. The PIT arrays would support ongoing Yakima/Klickitat Fisheries Project (YKFP) salmonid status and trends monitoring of smolt abundance and survival, migration and life history, and adult returns. The PIT arrays would also measure success of ongoing habitat improvements in the White Creek watershed, and hatchery/wild salmonid interactions in other Klickitat basin tributaries. Installation would take place within the existing stream channel and along the adjacent bank, below the ordinary high water mark. The work would include:

- Installation of one to two secure metal job boxes near the stream channel to house PIT readers and batteries. Cables would lead from the boxes to each instream antenna, laid in hand-dug trenches (measuring about 4 inches wide and 4-8 inches deep) excavated within the stream bed.
- Placement of 20-foot by 3-foot long in-stream PIT antennas. Each antenna is composed of wires housed in 3-inch HDPE pipe secured to the streambed via straps attached to either fencepost, duckbill, rebar, or bedrock substrate anchors. Each site would have between 2 and 6 antennas.
- No excavation or ground disturbance would occur outside of the stream channel, except for inserting T-posts, which would be pounded into the streambank below the highwater mark and used to mount solar panels and anchors for securing reader and battery boxes to earth.
- Installation would occur during low flow periods, possibly in dry channels (late summer to early fall).

Following installation, each location would be visited bi-weekly or monthly to download data, and to conduct operations and maintenance actions. Activities would include inventorying equipment age and function and updating hardware as needed. This may include removing and replacing cables, removing or replacing instream substrate-mounted antennae, decommissioning arrays, and replacing existing hardware.

The project sites would be accessed on foot and by existing access roads, vehicle pullouts, and staging areas.

These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with National Marine Fisheries Service on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System and Bonneville's commitments to the Yakama Nation in the 2020 Columbia River Fish Accord Extension agreement, 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/ Claire McClory

Claire McClory

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

August 4, 2021

Date

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 Tag Array Installations at Dead Canyon Creek and Trout Creek

Project Site Description

The Dead Canyon project site is located on Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) property and the Trout Creek project site is located on Yakama Nation tribal land. Both sites are located in remote, forested riparian areas of the Klickitat River watershed.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA determined that implementation of the proposed undertaking would result in no historic properties affected (WA 2021 119). The Washington Department of Historic Preservation concurred with BPA's determination on June 6, 2021, and the Yakama Nation Tribal Historic Preservation Office replied with a request to develop a post-review discovery protocol.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, work would be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by a professional archaeologist. A copy of the Inadvertent Discovery Protocol would be on site during project implementation.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minimal ground leveling and clearing of vegetation would be required to secure streamside components. Minor impact 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. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status or ESA-listed plant species present. Any construction-related impacts to vegetation would be temporary and minor.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status or ESA-listed wildlife species are documented in or adjacent to the project area and no critical habitat is present. No impact expected.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: ESA-listed mid-Columbia River steelhead are present at both project locations. Work would occur during low or no flow periods. Minor, temporary increase in stream turbidity during installation of in-water components. The project is covered under the HIP Biological Opinion under Section 7 of ESA with Project Notification Form number 2021080.

Notes:

- Project sponsors would adhere to all applicable site-specific conservation measures identified in the HIP consultation and approval.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands present.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impact expected.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change to land use.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance:

Explanation: No impact expected. The project sites are not within visually sensitive areas.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impact to air quality. The PIT arrays would be installed using hand tools and equipment.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary, minor noise increase during PIT array installation.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

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: 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: YKFP has permission from WDFW to install PIT arrays at the Dead Canyon Creek project site. The Trout Creek project site is on Yakama Nation lands. YKFP would obtain necessary approvals to conduct work on tribal property.

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

August 4, 2021

Date