

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: CRITFC Zone 6 Fishery Monitoring

Project No.: 2008-502-00

Project Manager: Corrie Veenstra

Location: Multiple counties, Oregon and 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 funding the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) to monitor and sample Columbia River Zone 6 tribal fisheries (platform, hook and line, gillnet). Zone 6 is an exclusive treaty fishing area that stretches 147 miles from the Bonneville to McNary dams. CRITFC would subcontract with the Yakama Nation Fisheries Department to monitor and sample tribal fisheries for catch data and PIT tags. Monitoring would occur at existing fishing platforms and landing locations throughout Zone 6. CRITFC staff would conduct weekly aerial surveys of gillnet efforts. Gillnet-counting flights would occur on a weekly basis at an approximate altitude of 2,000-2,500 feet over Zone 6. CRITFC and Yakama staff would use monitoring data to generate catch estimates for Zone 6 tribal fisheries.

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 CRITFC the under 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.

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: CRITFC Zone 6 Fishery Monitoring

Project Site Description

Activities would occur in Skamania, Klickitat and Benton counties in Washington and Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Morrow, and Umatilla counties in Oregon. Monitors would sample at various tribal fishing sites in Zone 6, which is an exclusive treaty fishing area that stretches 147 miles from the Bonneville to McNary dams. Gillnet-counting flights would occur on a weekly basis at an approximate altitude of 2,000-2,500 feet over Zone 6.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: This project would not involve ground disturbance of any kind. There is no potential to affect cultural resources.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no ground disturbance associated with these actions. Therefore, there is no potential to affect geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not include any vegetation management, ground disturbance, or actions that would impact vegetation. Therefore, there is no potential to affect plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no impact to wildlife or their habitat. Aircraft flight would occur at a height that would not cause wildlife disturbance from noise and monitors would be located in locations with existing human presence.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Monitoring would take place at the mainstem Columbia River tribal fisheries, and sampling on previously-harvested fish. There would be no take associated with these activities. There are no ground-disturbing activities planned. Therefore, the activities would have no effect on ESA-listed fish species, their habitat, or other waterbodies or floodplains.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not take place within or around wetlands, and therefore no potential to affect wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or use of groundwater is proposed.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The underlying land use would not change as a result of this project

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no adverse effects to the visual quality of the environment as a result of this project.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minor, temporary effects to the air quality of the environment as a result of travel to fishing sites and gillnet counting flights.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There may be minor, temporary effects to the noise quality of the environment as a result of weekly gillnet counting flights.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All personnel would use best management practices to protect worker health and safety.

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: NA

Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation: NA

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: NA

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: NA

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: Project actions proposed by CRITFC would be implemented by employees or contractors on Tribal property, or in public airspace with approved flight plans.

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 February 5, 2021
Israel Duran, ECF-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient CRGT