

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: New Marking & Monitoring Technologies Project (update to CX issued on July 20, 2021)

Project No.: 1983-319-00

Project Manager: Christine Petersen- EWP-4

Location: Skamania and Kitsap 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 proposes to provide funds to NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) for the development and evaluation of antennas and adapted power systems to enable Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tag systems to work in many environments, from remote locations to mainstem dams. In addition to antenna development, NOAA has been crucial in designing and implementing subsystems for improving PIT monitoring installations. NOAA continues to test, evaluate, and collect users' input for improvements which can be implemented in the infrastructure and readers. These fish-tracking technologies are then used to assess the effectiveness of management actions and strategies for recovery of Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed fish populations. Most of the work of developing, improving and evaluating PIT-tag systems used to detect migrating adult and juvenile salmonids and evaluating the program that uses PIT-tag codes to separate out targeted fish in the fish bypass facilities at hydropower dams is carried out in NOAA's Northwest Science Center. Additional work is centered on testing and evaluating the systems at the mainstem hydroelectric facilities once they have been installed. This project does not install or operate the PIT tag systems throughout the Columbia River Basin but would provide assistance to users as needed to trouble shoot detection issues. Installation of PIT tag antennas is completed by other agencies. This CX has been updated to reflect that the actions presented in this CX do not support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with US Fish and Wildlife Service.

The actions covered under this CX include:

- 1) Continued performance evaluation of ogee-based antennas.
- 2) Collaborate with Pacific State Marine Fisheries Commission and Biomark to fine tune antenna tuning post-installation.
- 3) Basin PIT tag support (Provide on-call technical assistance to users throughout the basin, including but not limited to WDFW, ODFW, IDFG, USFW, USGS, and several other NGOs.)

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

Development and evaluation of PIT-tag detection systems throughout Oregon, Washington, and Idaho.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities would occur within the confines of the existing structures, and would not require any ground-disturbing activities for the completion of this work. Ground disturbance or activities external to the existing structure are not planned. This project does not install new systems.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Any activities required for the completion of this work would be within the confines of existing facilities. Ground disturbance or activities external to the existing structure are not planned.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work is within existing facilities; no habitat present. There are no anticipated impacts to any sensitive plant species, and none exist within the immediate area of impact.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work is implemented within existing facilities; no habitat present. No sensitive (including Endangered Species Act-listed) wildlife species are impacted during data collection at the facilities and there would be no effect.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Work may be located near major bodies of water. However, all work would occur in the footprint of existing structures, and would not require any ground-disturbing activities for the completion of the work. No sensitive (including Endangered Species Act-listed) fish species are impacted during data collection at the facilities and there would be no effect.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would occur in the existing structures and wetlands would not be impacted.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would occur in the footprint of existing facilities, and no ground excavation is planned.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would occur in the existing facilities footprints, and would not impact or change land use.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would occur in existing facilities, and would not impact visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Data collection and evaluation of PIT-tag systems would not impact air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would occur in existing structures, and operation of the system would not raise noise levels above background.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would occur in the existing facilities, and 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 is in conjunction with facility operators at federally-owned property

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 November 2, 2021
Israel Duran, ECF-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient/CRGT