

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Yakama Reservation Watershed, Research, Monitoring, Operations and Maintenance (*Update to the Categorical Exclusion previously published on April 7<sup>th</sup> 2020*)

**Project No.:** 1996-035-01

**Project Manager:** Russell Scranton – EWP-4

**Location:** Yakima and Klickitat, 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; B1.20 Protection of cultural resources, fish and wildlife habitat

**Description of the Proposed Action:** The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to provide funds to the Yakama Nation (YN) to conduct monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and operation and maintenance activities at various sites for the portions of the Yakama River basin located on the Yakama Reservation.

The M&E activities provide viable salmonid population (VSP) estimates for steelhead within the Yakima River Basin. This project was developed to support evaluation of VSP parameters (abundance, productivity, spatial structure, and diversity) for Yakima River steelhead populations. Data from this project would be used to evaluate population status and trends and address critical uncertainties. The Yakima River Steelhead Major Population Group (MPG) populations, and directly informs efforts to recover steelhead populations in the Yakima River Basin. Funding the proposed actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with both NMFS and USFWS on the O&M of the Columbia River System. These actions would also support Bonneville's commitments to the Yakama Nation 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.).

To collect the M&E data, YN Fisheries staff would operate rotary screw traps at 4 locations on Toppenish, Satus and Ahtanum Creeks. Traps are attached via cables to stationary objects (i.e. trees, diversion dams) to avoid coming loose and floating down the creek. These traps were installed in these locations since approximately 1999. When checking the traps juvenile steelhead over 80 mm would be targeted for PIT tagging, biological data collection (length, weight) and DNA sampling to provide to researchers at Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife for stock identification. PIT tagging:

- Approximately 4,000 steelhead in Toppenish Creek
- Approximately 1,000 steelhead in Satus Creek

- Approximately 200 steelhead in Ahtanum Creek

YN staff would conduct walking steelhead redd count surveys on Toppenish, Satus and Ahtanum creeks. The redd count surveys would consist of three passes by surveyors travelling by foot of 192 miles of suitable steelhead spawning habitat on all three creeks between March and June. At each redd location a gps point would be collected to examine the spatial distribution of steelhead spawning habitat. YN staff would collect water temperature data via Hobo temperature dataloggers at 40 sites annually between March and October. These sites are either used for longterm monitoring or to monitor the effects of specific restoration projects and management actions on in-stream water temperatures. YN staff would collect manual discharge measurements at 37 sites in Ahtanum, Toppenish and Satus creeks. Most of these sites are permanent and measured weekly through the year providing valuable information to assess restoration projects that aim to improve stream function.

YN staff would be conducting the ongoing operation and maintenance activities at existing water monitoring stations, wells, and restoration sites on portions of the Yakama Reservation. No new ground disturbance would occur for these activities. Operation and maintenance activities would include:

- Collect wading discharge measurements in specific locations to support the operation of diversions and instream flow. Stream flow measurements or staff gage measurements are used to operate diversions in accordance to the Wapato Irrigation Project (WIP). The purpose of this work is to assure that the YN's minimum instream flow criteria is met throughout the irrigation season.
- Maintaining approximately 30 solar powered stock wells, activities would include checking if solar panels are functional and clean, if not functioning minor parts would be replaced.
- Maintaining approximately 158 miles of range unit fences and 18 miles of riparian fences including checking for damage by cattle, humans, or weather, restringing or replacing wire in damaged areas, and resecuring t-posts that have become loose from damage.
- Maintaining pre-existing vegetation from previous restoration projects through physical and mechanical methods, including manually pulling weeds or mechanically cutting with a weed whacker. No herbicides would be used for this maintenance.

**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/ Catherine Clark

Catherine Clark  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Motus Recruiting and Staffing, Inc.

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel  
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

<u>/s/ Katey C. Grange</u>	<u>May 18, 2022</u>
Katey C. Grange	Date
NEPA Compliance Officer	

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:** Yakama Reservation Watershed, Research, Monitoring, Operations and Maintenance

## **Project Site Description**

Steelhead are captured and PIT-tagged at screw trap locations within Satus Creek, Ahtanum Creek and Toppenish Creek in Yakima County, Washington. Satus Creek screw trap is located less than 1 mile south of Granger, Washington. Ahtanum Creek screw trap is located approximately 3 miles south of Yakima, Washington. Toppenish Creek has two screw traps, the upper trap is located approximately 7.5 miles southwest of Toppenish, Washington and the lower trap is located approximately 7.3 miles southeast of Toppenish, Washington.

Redd count surveys are conducted in Satus, Ahtanum, and Toppenish watersheds within steelhead spawning habitats. Satus watershed is approximately 25 miles southwest of Toppenish, Washington and 19 miles south of White Swan, Washington. Ahtanum watershed is approximately 12 miles southwest of Yakima, Washington. Toppenish watershed is approximately 2.5 miles northeast of White Swan, Washington.

Hobo temperature dataloggers would be located throughout the Yakama Reservation on waterbodies within Klickitat, Washington and Yakima, Washington. Solar powered stock wells and livestock and riparian fencing would be maintained in a variety of agricultural landuses and would be located within 10 miles of White Swan, Washington.

## **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All activities are ongoing operations and maintenance activities. Including the operation of rotary screw traps that have been anchored to existing structures for over 10 years; thus, BPA determined that there would be no potential to affect historic or cultural properties.

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground disturbance would be minimal and limited to minor sedimentation when walking in rivers or streams or maintaining vegetation or fencing. Therefore, there would be little to no impact to geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The vegetation maintenance would remove or disturb non-native vegetation to help the survival of native plantings post-restoration projects. Therefore, the native plants, including federal/state special status species, would not be substantially affected by the project activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions would have minor, temporary effect on wildlife due to minimally increased noise (above ambient level) and visual disturbance. There would be no new construction of fencing for maintenance activities. Therefore, negligible effects on wildlife, including including federal/state special status species, are anticipated.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Effects of the M&E on 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 US Fish and Wildlife Service Section 10 permit (TE-05166B-0). Despite short-term adverse impacts from monitoring, the overall impacts would be beneficial to the ESA-listed species. Operation and Maintenance activities would not occur in waterbodies and would have no effect to fish or waterbodies.

Activities are not anticipated to have any effect to 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 screw trap operations or redd surveys, but this effect is not anticipated to be significant.

#### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project activities would not disturb wetlands. Therefore, no effect on wetlands.

#### **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project activities would not result in an increase in groundwater use. The work would not change the hydrological regime and therefore, would not effect groundwater recharge.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Land use would not change as a result of the proposed project activities.

#### **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary changes to visual quality could occur in the immediate project areas due to screw trap operations and maintenance activities that include stock wells, fencing, and vegetation.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary changes to air quality could occur due to dust and vehicle emissions generated during the work.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary intermittent noise would occur during implementation.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities are 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: 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: 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, 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/ Catherine Clark May 18, 2022  
Catherine Clark, ECF Date  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Motus Recruiting and Staffing, Inc.