

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Survival & Migration of Natural Origin Chinook

Project No.: 2023-002-00

Project Manager: Jenny Lord

Location: Custer County, ID

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 the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes (SBT) to monitor the Chinook salmon population in Bear Valley. The project goal is to collect data including performance metrics associated with abundance, productivity, spatial structure, and diversity.

Juvenile Monitoring – A rotary screw trap consisting of two floating pontoons, a rotating corkscrew cone, and a live box would be used to capture and estimate the abundance of outmigrating juvenile salmonids. The weir is installed in pieces and by hand once flows are low enough to do so safely.

Adult Monitoring – Video equipment would also be installed at a fish weir to record fish passage. Weir videography and redd counts would be used for estimates of adult escapement. The weir is a temporary structure consisting of four weir wings and is constructed using 48 tripods, 28 panels, and 1,600 pickets attached to an in-stream fish counting chamber at the apex of each weir wing. The trap is installed on a trailer that is backed down, like a boat at a boat ramp, and secured in place.

These 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 also support Bonneville's commitments to the SBT 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.

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

/s/ Ted Gresh

Ted Gresh

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

January 23, 2023

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: Survival & Migration of Natural Origin Chinook

Project Site Description

Bear Valley Creek is a headwater tributary of the MF Salmon River. The fish monitoring station is located on U.S. Forest Service land within the Salmon-Challis National Forest, 3.5 river miles upstream from the confluence with Marsh Creek.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: There is no ground disturbance proposed by this project; therefore, actions proposed by this project would have no potential to impact historic or cultural resources.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is no ground disturbance proposed by this project. Therefore, geology and soils would not be impacted by the project.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is no ground disturbance proposed by this project and there are no anticipated impacts to any plant species, and none exist within the immediate area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing or other activity that may affect wildlife or wildlife habitat is proposed. Thus, there would be no impact to ESA-listed wildlife as a result of the proposed work.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Fish research on anadromous salmonids is a common and wide-spread activity within the Columbia River basin. NMFS issued the SBT a Scientific Research Permit (16298-4R) for these activities and any potential impacts to fish would be minimized by following terms

and conditions of that permit. There would be no impact to adjacent waterbodies or floodplains because no ground-disturbing activities are proposed.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing activities are proposed. Thus, the action does not have the potential to impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing activities that may affect groundwater or aquifers are proposed. Thus, there would be no impact to groundwater and aquifers as a result of the proposed work.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no changes to land use and no impacts to specially-designated areas. Therefore, there is no potential to affect land use or specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Both the weir and screw trap would be visible from shore but only for 4 months each year (June-September). Therefore, there would be minor and short-term visual effects to the visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Any increase in emissions from vehicles accessing the project site would be minor and short term.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The weir and screw trap do not generate noise so there would be no effects to ambient noise levels.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All applicable safety regulations would be followed during monitoring activities.

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: The project would occur on land owned by the U.S. Forest Service, that has approved SBT's planned operations on Bear Valley Creek through the issuance of a Special Use Permit (LMN422122, exp. 12/31/2026).

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

Signed: /s/ Ted Gresh January 23, 2023
Ted Gresh Date
Environmental Protection Specialist