

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Lower Granite Dam Adult Trap Operations Project

Project No.: 2005-002-00

Project Manager: Christine Petersen, EWL-4

Location: Whitman 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: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to provide funds to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries and Ocean Associates for the collection and sampling of adult salmonids at Lower Granite Dam on the Snake River in Whitman County, Washington.

The adult fish trap would be used for fall Chinook broodstock collection; run reconstruction sampling; sampling of Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT)-tagged fish from transportation studies to determine life history type; radio telemetry studies; PIT-tagging of wild adult steelhead and wild adult Chinook to assess the efficacy of using Genetic Stock Identification (GSI); and PIT tags to estimate population characteristics of naturally produced steelhead and Chinook salmon. Incidental bull trout observations would also be recorded.

Fieldwork for these fish sampling activities would occur between the spring and fall of each year. Methods would consist of walking the area surrounding the dam to check the fish traps and sample PIT tagged fish by hand. No construction work would occur in-water or include any excavation practices that would impact waters of the U.S. or wetland areas.

Funding the proposed actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations with both National Marine Fisheries Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System, while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for the effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System 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; 89 FR 34074, April 30, 2024), 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.¹

Catherine Clark
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

¹ BPA is aware that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), on February 25, 2025, issued an interim final rule to remove its NEPA implementing regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500–1508. Based on CEQ guidance, and to promote completion of its NEPA review in a timely manner and without delay, in this CX BPA is voluntarily relying on the CEQ regulations, in addition to DOE's own regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021, to meet its obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.

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

The proposed collection and sampling of adult salmonids would occur at Lower Granite Dam on the Snake River in Whitman County, Washington. Within the Lower Granite Dam, the fish trap would be accessed on foot in order to perform fish sampling and collection activities by hand.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The BPA archaeologist determined the project would have no potential to affect historic properties. The action would be limited to funding on-the-ground fish collection and sampling fieldwork. No ground disturbance would occur as a result of the proposed actions.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no impact to geology and soils as there would be no ground disturbance associated with the proposed actions.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no impacts to ESA-listed, state special-status, or non-listed plant species known to exist on the site as there would be no ground disturbance associated with the proposed actions.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no impacts to ESA-listed, state special-status wildlife species, or designated critical habitat as there would be no ground disturbance associated with the proposed actions.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no ground disturbance or in-water work proposed as a result of the proposed actions. Therefore, there would be no impact to waterbodies, floodplains, or habitats as a result of the proposed actions.

PIT tagging wild-origin anadromous salmonids is a common wide-spread activity within the Columbia River basin. Since these activities support ongoing commitments under the 2020 NMFS Columbia River System BiOp (2020 CRS BiOp), NMFS annually issues a Determination of Take Memorandum describing the maximum number of individual ESA-listed fish that may be tagged in a given year; the number of fish tagged in support of Lower Granite Dam is well below that threshold.

Bull trout are covered under the USFWS BiOp (dated July 24, 2020) on the proposed operations and maintenance of the fourteen multiple use dam and reservoir projects in the Columbia River System located in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana, and its effects on bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) and designated critical habitat in accordance with section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Annual reporting of bull trout observation and take would be reported in accordance with the BiOp.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no potential to impact wetlands as there would be no ground disturbance associated with the proposed actions.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no potential to impact groundwater and aquifers. No ground-disturbing actions are proposed that would affect groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would not impact land uses or specially-designated areas. Access to the project site is on existing road networks and all activities are compatible with local land uses.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed fish sampling actions would not have any effect on visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small increase in emissions would occur from vehicles entering and exiting the fish facility. However, this increase would be very minor and short term.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed fish sampling actions would not result in an increase in ambient noise within the project area.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Worker carrying out fish sampling actions would be trained in proper tagging techniques, and this activity is not considered hazardous, nor does it result in any health or safety risks to the general public. Field crews working near the fish trap and areas along the Lower Granite Dam near the Snake River would take water safety precautions, such as wearing life vests as appropriate.

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: No notification would occur – All work would be located at an existing facility where fish sampling actions have occurred in the past.

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

Signed:

Catherine Clark
Environmental Protection Specialist