

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Yankee Fork IPTDS Project

Project No.: 2002-059-00

Project Manager: Verl Miller, EWM-4

Location: Custer County, Idaho

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.20 Protection of Cultural Resources, Fish and Wildlife Habitat

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund Shoshone-Bannock Tribes to install two Integrated Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) Tag Detection Systems (IPTDS) within the Salmon-Challis National Forest to monitor the movement of juvenile and adult salmon.

The IPTDSs would be installed between July 15 and August 15, 2025. IPTDS installation includes instream and upland elements. The instream components include four antennas (3 feet wide and 20 feet long) installed flush with the streambed to maintain the natural profile and anchored to the streambed. The antenna arrays are connected to the master controller and power using conduit-encased cables trenched (4 inches wide and 4–8 inches deep) into the substrate. There would be approximately 100 feet of trenched cable at the 5 Mile IPTDS, and 250 feet of trenched cable at the West Fork IPTDS connecting the arrays to the master controllers. The master controller and satellite modem system for remote data transmission and environmental probes for data monitoring are housed in a 36-inch-long, 30-inch-wide steel enclosure, positioned outside the floodplain. Power for the system would be provided via solar panels, a 260AH battery system, and a hybrid thermoelectric generator placed next to the master controller. The work would be completed with hand tools and access and staging would be along the roadside.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp) and the 2020 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Columbia River System BiOp (2020 FWS CRS BiOp). These actions also support Bonneville's commitments to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes in the Columbia River Fish Accord, as amended, while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for 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

Israel Duran
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.

Proposed Action: Yankee Fork IPTDS Project

Project Site Description

Installation would occur at two locations in the Yankee Fork of the Salmon River watershed about 22 miles northeast of Stanley, in Custer County, Idaho on US Forest Service-managed property within the Salmon-Challis National Forest. The Yankee Fork supports a diverse array of native fishes; however, past and current land management activities (i.e. intense timber harvesting, and dredge mining) have impacted areas critical to their survival. The Yankee Fork Gold Dredge is nearby and there are camping, mining, trails, other recreational activities and interests within a several mile radius.

The 5 Mile IPTDS is located on the Yankee Fork upstream of the confluence of 5 Mile Creek in the Salmon-Challis National Forest (Figure 2.) Access and staging are available at the sawmill. Access and staging would be along Yankee Fork Road.

The West Fork IPTDS is located downstream of the confluence of Sawmill Creek with the West Fork Yankee Fork Salmon River (West Fork). Access and staging would be along the West Fork Yankee Fork Road.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA made a determination of no historic properties affected and consulted with the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and Shoshone-Bannock Tribes on March 24, 2025 (BPA CR Project No.: ID 2025 012; SHPO Project: 2025-425). BPA received a request from Idaho SHPO for additional information. BPA sent a revised determination of “no adverse effect to historic properties” on June 16, 2025. SHPO concurred with the determination on June 27, 2025. Without further comment, the consultation period ended July 16 2025.

Notes:

- In the event any archaeological material is encountered during project activities, work would be stopped immediately and a BPA Archaeologist would be notified, as well as consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, short-term soil disturbance from instream antenna placement and trenching for cables. All work would be done with hand tools to minimize impacts. The control box for the PIT tag array would sit atop the ground, resulting in no soil disturbance.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*) is Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed as threatened and could potentially be present within the Project area (US Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation [IPaC], 2025.) However, the area has been highly impacted due to previous mining efforts and suitable habitat is not present. No other Federal or State special-status plant species are within the project sites. Streamside equipment may require minor disturbance to nearby plants that are hindering installation, but no broad-scale vegetation removal is proposed.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The Project area has the potential to contain ESA-listed Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) and North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*) and their critical habitats are present within Custer County (IPaC, 2025) but are not known to exist within the Project area. The monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) and Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee (*Bombus suckleyi*) are proposed for ESA listing and may be in the Project area, but there is no designated critical habitat for either species. No other Federal or State special-status species or habitat are known to exist on the project site; therefore, there would be no impact from the installation of the PIT tag array and its associated parts. Wildlife may be temporarily displaced by construction noise during implementation or maintenance but would return to the project area once after construction.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Endangered Species Act-listed fish species Snake River spring/summer Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), Snake River steelhead (*O. mykiss*), their critical habitats, and bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) are present. Minor, short-term disturbance to fish may occur during IPTDS installation. The amount of sediment displacement is low and the reconstructed instream environment would be recolonized by fish and other aquatic organisms in a matter of hours to days. Project-related impacts to ESA-listed species are addressed in BPA's Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) biological opinions with NMFS and USFWS. In-water work elements would be installed with best management practices designed to minimize the severity and duration of temporary water quality impacts in accordance with the conditions of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and State of Idaho's joint Nationwide Permit 27 (NWP27) for Aquatic Habitat Restoration, Establishment, and Enhancement Activities, to be obtained by the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes. There would be no adverse physical changes to water bodies, floodplains, or fish resulting from the proposed action.

Notes:

- Shoshone-Bannock Tribes would adhere to the Terms and Conditions and Conservation Measures in BPA's HIP consultation documents and the NWP 27 during the IPTDS installation.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Wetlands are not present; thus, the action does not have the potential to impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Only minor ground-disturbing activities are proposed and the actions would not result in an increase in groundwater use. The work would not change the hydrological regime and, therefore, would not affect groundwater recharge.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Access to field sites is on existing road networks and all activities are compatible with local land use. Land use would not change. The project is not located in a specially-designated area or Wild and Scenic River.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Short-term changes to the landscape would occur during installation, such as vehicles and equipment. No visually prominent vegetation, landform, or structural changes would be made to the West Fork or Yankee Fork. The IPDTS would be placed on the river's bed, below the surface of the water. The controller hardware would be placed outside of Ordinary High Water, but would be small and not visually obtrusive. Therefore, the proposed action would not have a permanent impact on visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A temporary increase in emissions and dust from vehicles accessing the project site would be very minor and short-term during construction. A negligible amount of temporary dust and vehicle emissions could be generated during project activities. Emissions and dust levels would return to normal conditions immediately once the project is completed.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would result in a temporary increase in ambient noise. Any noise emitted from hand held equipment would be short-term and temporary during daylight hours and would cease following project completion.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work is not considered hazardous, nor does it result in any health or safety risks to the general public. Personnel are trained in proper equipment management techniques, and all applicable safety regulations would be followed. There would be no soil contamination or hazardous conditions and no CERCLA sites within the project area.

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 actions are proposed by the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes to be implemented within the Salmon-Challis National Forest property. The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes has coordinated with the National Forest.

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

Signed:

Israel Duran
Environmental Protection Specialist