

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Hatchery Reform Research Funding

Project No.: 1993-056-00

Project Manager: Deborah Docherty, EWM-4

Location: Winthrop National Fish Hatchery (Methow River), Manchester Research Station, and the University of Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B3.16 Research Activities in Aquatic Environments

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to provide funding to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration, and the University of Washington for ongoing research on the effects of hatchery practices at the Winthrop National Fish Hatchery (WNFH) in the production of Upper Columbia River steelhead. The actions include the capture of juvenile and adult steelhead from the Methow River in support of various research projects on all life stages of these fish from captured fish or from the eggs and juveniles produced at the WNFH. Research will be conducted at WNFH and at NOAA's Northwest Fisheries Science Center Laboratories at the Manchester Research Station in Port Orchard, WA.

Reasonable and Prudent Alternative (RPA) 63.2 of the FCRPS Biological Opinion calls for determining the effects of implemented hatchery reforms on salmon and steelhead populations. This project provides for implementation and evaluation of major hatchery reforms identified by the RM&E workgroup for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's WNFH. Research projects are related to:

- the required transition to local broodstock
- the affect on growth, smoltification, and survival of fish reared in either hatchery tanks or artificial stream environments
- the effect of hatchery -accelerated growth rates on post-release survival

The objective is to identify effective hatchery reform actions that 1) can accommodate a later return and spawn timing, 2) induce proper smoltification, 3) promote high survival, and 4) maintain natural levels of fitness in the hatchery stock. Successful transition to hatchery production from local broodstock requires effective implementation of the hatchery reforms evaluated in this project.

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, July 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/ Robert W. Shull

Robert W. Shull
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
FirstTekDOS, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Gene Lynard FOR

Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason

Stacy L. Mason
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: August 1, 2017

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.

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Project Site Description

Activities will occur at the Winthrop National Fish Hatchery in Winthrop, Washington and at the Manchester Research Facility in Port Orchard, Washington. Both of these are long-standing fish hatchery facilities. Juvenile and adult steelhead capture will occur at existing weirs or traps on the Methow River. The sites are being used but will not be modified.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There are no ground-disturbing activities with this project, and there is no potential to affect historic properties.		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There are no ground-disturbing activities with this project, so geology and soils would not be affected.		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There are no ground-disturbing activities with this project and no plants would be disturbed.		
4. Wildlife (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There are no ground-disturbing activities with this project, so wildlife or wildlife habitat would not be affected.		
5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including federal/state special-status species and ESUs)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There are no ground-disturbing activities with this project, and water bodies and floodplains would not be affected. ESA-listed steelhead will be handled, but this handling has been consulted on as part of the completed consultation for WNFH hatchery operations. This research is itself in response to consultation requirements from the FCRPS BiOp. NMFS standard and approved fish-handling techniques are applied to minimize impacts to fish.		

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| 6. Wetlands | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> There are no ground-disturbing activities with this project, so wetlands would not be affected. | | |
| 7. Groundwater and Aquifers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> There are no ground-disturbing activities with this project and there is no potential to impact groundwater. | | |
| 8. Land Use and Specially Designated Areas | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> There would be no change in land use and no work in specially-designated areas. | | |
| 9. Visual Quality | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> There are no ground-disturbing activities with this project and no potential to cause impacts to visual quality. | | |
| 10. Air Quality | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> There are no ground-disturbing activities or emissions-emitting equipment operations with this project. | | |
| 11. Noise | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> There are no ground-disturbing activities or noise-generating equipment operations with this project. | | |
| 12. Human Health and Safety | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> There are no hatchery operational changes proposed, thus no potential for changing risk environment for human health and safety. | | |

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, if necessary:

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: No landowner or neighbor engagement necessary; there are no ground-disturbing activities and all activities occur at previously existing facilities. All actions are consistent in character with ongoing operations at these facilities.

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

Signed: /s/ Robert W. Shull

Robert W. Shull – ECF-4
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: August 1, 2017