

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Nez Perce Harvest Monitoring Project

Project No.: 2002-060-00

Project Manager: Sandra Fife, EWL - 4

Location: Columbia and Asotin Counties, Washington and Clearwater, Idaho, Lemhi, Valley, and Lewis Counties, Idaho

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 Nez Perce Tribe (NPT) for harvest monitoring within the Snake, Salmon, and Clearwater Rivers and their tributaries and in the Zone 6 fishery, which includes an area of the Columbia River that stretches from Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam in Columbia and Asotin Counties, Washington and Clearwater, Idaho, Lemhi, Valley, and Lewis Counties, Idaho.

The project objective would be to implement statistical survey methods to estimate harvest in specific tributaries and to assist in evaluating impacts of planned fisheries on populations/stocks being harvested in treaty fisheries. Harvest monitoring of tribal fisheries would rely upon run-size and run-size estimates for those salmon and steelhead stocks/populations produced in BPA-funded hatcheries that support fisheries. Pre-season and early in-season run-size estimates are integrated into implementation of the harvest monitoring methodologies. The project would be a collaboration between Yakima Indian Nation and Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) to determine the appropriate NPT harvest monitoring role in Zone 6 during the spring management period.

On the ground harvest monitoring would be implemented by employing a training program based on literature review, current sampling plan, and past monitoring experience. Species to be monitored would include Snake River Basin spring/summer Chinook (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) and Snake River fall chinook and steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) in the mainstem Snake and Clearwater rivers; and primarily spring/summer Chinook in select tributaries in Salmon River Subbasin (South Fork Salmon River).

The project would conduct four common data collection activities associated with estimating and analyzing Nez Perce treaty harvest consisting of creel surveys; in-season interview surveys; post-season interview surveys; and gillnet in-season interview surveys. The field schedule for monitoring would be as follows: steelhead/fall Chinook sampling would be conducted from late August through March of the following year; mainstem Columbia River (Zone 6) spring ceremonial gillnet fishery would be conducted March through mid-June, and spring/summer Chinook sampling would be conducted from the end of April through mid-August.

Depending upon the length of fishery area being sampled and access, the monitors would be required to count individuals fishing and to make observations of their catch. In most instances, the fieldwork would involve a combination of walking and driving throughout the sampling locations. The harvest monitors would be required to observe fishing and the species of fish being harvested and/or released. This would be completed by walking along river banks and visually observing the type of fish species harvested and whether their adipose fin is intact or removed. This would signify whether the fish is likely a hatchery or wild fish. The monitors would not handle the fish or collect biological data. No work would occur in-water or include any excavation practices that would impact waters of the U.S. or wetland areas.

These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with National Marine Fisheries Service on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System, 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/ Mandy Hope

Mandy Hope
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
ACS Professional Staffing

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

<u>/s/ Sarah T. Biegel</u>	<u>March 17, 2021</u>
Sarah T. Biegel	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: Nez Perce Harvest Monitoring Project

Project Site Description

Nez Perce Harvest Monitoring would occur within the Snake, Salmon, and Clearwater Rivers and their tributaries and in the Zone 6 fishery, which includes an area of the Columbia River that stretches from Bonneville Dam to McNary Dam in Columbia and Asotin Counties, Washington and Clearwater, Idaho, Lemhi, Valley, and Lewis Counties, Idaho.

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 harvest monitoring fieldwork. No ground disturbance would occur as a result of the proposed work.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to geology and soils would occur as there would be no ground disturbance associated with the proposed fieldwork.

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

Potential for Significance: No

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed, state-listed, sensitive wildlife species, or designated critical habitat would be affected by the project as there is no ground disturbance proposed.

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 fieldwork. Therefore, there would be no impact to waterbodies, floodplains, or

habitats as a result of the proposed project. No ESA-listed fish species would be affected as the harvest monitoring would not require fish handling and would consist of visually monitoring the salmonids being harvested and/or released.

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.

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 field 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 harvest monitoring fieldwork 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 field site. However, this increase would be very minor and short term.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed harvest monitoring fieldwork would not result in an increase in ambient noise within the project area.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Workers carrying out harvest monitoring activities are 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 Snake, Salmon, and Clearwater Rivers and their tributaries 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 – All work is located at existing facilities where harvest monitoring activities 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: /s/ Mandy Hope March 17, 2021
Mandy Hope, ECF - 4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
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