

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: PLCI Lamprey Passage Barrier Inventory

Project No.: 2017-005-00 (Contract Number 87639)

Project Manager: Siena M. Lopez-Johnston, EWM-4

Location: Multiple Counties in Oregon and Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B3.3 Research related to conservation of fish and wildlife

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District (primary contractor), in partnership with the Lower Columbia River Watershed Council (sub-contractor), to develop an inventory of barriers to Pacific lamprey (*Entosphenus tridentatus*) passage in the Lower Columbia Sub-Unit. The work would be funded as part of the larger Pacific Lamprey Conservation Initiative (PLCI) umbrella project. PLCI is a cooperative effort among agencies and tribes to achieve long-term persistence of Pacific lamprey and support traditional tribal cultural use throughout the Columbia River Basin. Funding supports ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System on fish and wildlife in the main stem 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.).

The work would include inventorying and assessing potential barriers to lamprey passage. From this inventory, a prioritized list of sites and recommended passage improvements would be developed for future passage improvement projects to be carried out by partner organizations. Existing barrier databases and barrier assessments would be reviewed and evaluated. In some cases, passage status would be determined remotely, but field assessments would be required at some sites. Field crews would only perform visual assessments of the barriers and surrounding areas. No in-water work or ground disturbance would be required, and no barrier removal or modification would be funded as part of this effort.

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/ W. Walker Stinnette

W. Walker Stinnette

Contract Environmental Protection Specialist

Salient CRGT

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad J. Hamel, ECF-4

Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

May 19, 2021

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: PLCI Lamprey Passage Barrier Inventory

Project Site Description

The barrier inventory would occur within the Lower Columbia Sub-Unit, which is part of the larger Lower Columbia/Willamette Regional Management Unit. Specific watersheds within the Lower Columbia Sub-Unit include the Sandy, Lewis, Upper and Lower Cowlitz, Clatskanie, and Lower Columbia River watersheds. Initially, existing barrier databases would be screened remotely, and on-the-ground barrier assessments would occur at multiple sites throughout the sub-unit, as needed. The exact number and locations of field sites remain to be determined pending the initial remote screening process.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not require any ground disturbance that could potentially impact archaeological resources. No modifications to existing built historic resources are proposed. Therefore, the undertaking would have no potential to cause effects to historic properties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not require any ground disturbance. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not require any ground disturbance or any tree or vegetation removal or management. The project would not result in adverse modification to suitable special-status plant habitats. Therefore, the proposed project would have no effect on special-status plant species or habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Field assessments of passage barriers could cause minor and temporary wildlife disturbance from elevated noise and human presence. However, proposed activities would be temporary (less than one day at each site) and largely consistent with human activities

and natural processes typically occurring at the sites. Wildlife species that could be present in the area would likely be habituated to this level of human activity. The project would not result in adverse modification to suitable special-status species habitat. Therefore, the proposed project would have no effect on special-status wildlife species or habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not require any ground disturbance or in-water work. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact water bodies and floodplains and would have no effect on special-status fish species or habitats.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not require any ground disturbance or any tree or vegetation removal or management. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not require any ground disturbance. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not require a change in land use and would not impact specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not impact visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Field assessments of passage barriers would result in temporary and minor dust and vehicle emissions. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the assessments.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Field assessments of passage barriers would result in temporary and minor noise from vehicle use and human presence during daylight hours. There would be no long-term change in ambient noise following completion of the assessments.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities are not considered hazardous and would not introduce new hazards or safety risks to the general public. Therefore, the proposed project would not be expected to impact 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: 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 landowner notification, involvement, or coordination would be required as all sample sites would likely be accessed via existing roads and public lands. The Columbia Soil and Water Conservation District and the Lower Columbia River Watershed Council would be responsible for coordinating site access with private landowners, if applicable.

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

Signed: /s/ W. Walker Stinnette May 19, 2021
W. Walker Stinnette, EC-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient CRGT