

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Snake River Fall Chinook Research & Monitoring Project

**Project No.:** 1991-029-00

**Project Manager:** Deborah Docherty - EWM-4

**Location:** Baker, Clearwater, Franklin, Idaho and Nez Perce counties in Idaho; Morrow, Umatilla and Wallowa counties in Oregon; Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, Klickitat, Skamania, Walla Walla and Whitman counties, 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 fund the U.S. Geological Survey to implant Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tags in wild fall Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) subyearlings in the Snake River basin and analyze subsequent detection data to estimate survival and growth; describe run timing and life history attributes; evaluate the effectiveness of summer spill; and explore the roles of food availability, growth, and habitat-rearing capacity as potential limiting factors.

The proposed actions would include:

1. Beach seining and PIT tag subyearling Chinook salmon in the Snake River basin.
2. Obtaining up to 350 previously-tagged subyearlings from the run passing Lower Granite Dam and record metrics.
3. Surveys, including but not limited to: conducting snorkel surveys; conducting site assessments (e.g. pebble counts, elevation surveys); carcass surveys; redd counts; stomach dissection; water quality data; and ongoing data collection.

Existing access routes would be used and no ground disturbance or changes in hydro operations would be required for the data collection.

These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultations 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/ Israel Duran

Israel Duran  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Salient/CRGT

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel  
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange                      August 5, 2021

Katey C. Grange                      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:** Snake River Fall Chinook Research & Monitoring Project

## **Project Site Description**

All activities would occur within the Snake River subbasin in multiple counties of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington.

## **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is no ground disturbance planned and there would be no impacts to historic or cultural resources as a result of these actions.

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is no ground disturbance planned and therefore geology and soils would not be impacted by the proposed activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no anticipated impacts to any plant species, and none exist within the immediate area of impact.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The activities at Lower Granite Dam would not impact wildlife. Seining and survey activities may temporarily impact wildlife due to temporary human presence within the project areas.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: National Marine Fisheries Service Section 7 consultation completed for research purposes under the 2020 Columbia River System Biological Opinion for take of listed Chinook, steelhead trout (*O. mykiss*) and sockeye salmon (*O. kisutch*); Determination of Take 16-21-USGS-34; Sec 10 permit (01EIFW00-2012-F-0448) for potential impacts to bull

trout. Non-listed fish may be temporarily disturbed due to survey and seining activities. Non-target fish encountered during seining operations would be released upon identification. There is no ground disturbance planned; activities would not impact or change waterbodies or floodplains.

## **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is no ground disturbance planned; activities would not impact or change wetlands.

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is no ground disturbance planned; activities would not impact or change groundwater or aquifers.

## **8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The activities would not impact or change land use.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The activities would not impact or change land use.

## **10. Air Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The work would not impact air quality.

## **11. Noise**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Noise levels may be increased, but this would only occur during the normal working hours of the study period.

## **12. Human Health and Safety**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Safety regulations would be followed as necessary.

### **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: This work would be implemented at existing facilities or on public lands. The sponsor would coordinate sampling and data collection occurring on public lands with the underlying land manager.

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

Signed: /s/ Israel Duran August 5, 2021  
Israel Duran, ECF-4 Date  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Salient/CRGT