

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Steelhead Kelt Reconditioning Project

Project No.: 2008-458-00

Project Manager: Amy Mai

Location: Okanogan County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B 3.3 Research related to conservation of fish, wildlife, and cultural resources

Description of the Proposed Action:

The Yakama Nation (YN), with funding from Bonneville Power Administration, proposes to continue implementing a steelhead kelt reconditioning program in the Methow River basin in Okanogan County, Washington. The goal of the project is to test whether the abundance of naturally-produced Upper Columbia River steelhead can be increased on spawning grounds in various tributaries of the Methow River through long-term kelt reconditioning methods. Project objectives include: (1) reconditioning steelhead kelts using long-term methods at existing hatchery facilities, (2) evaluating kelt survival and program effectiveness, and (3) contributing to ongoing monitoring and evaluation studies to document the reproductive success of reconditioned kelts after release.

The construction and operation of the steelhead kelt reconditioning facility is covered under a separate CX, issued by USFWS. This CX refers only to the collection of adult steelhead to supply the program.

The project proposes to collect up to 150 natural-origin steelhead kelts at five temporary picket weirs located at Little Bridge Creek, South Fork Gold Creek, Hancock Springs, Libby Creek, and Beaver Creek. Traps would operate over a period of 90 working days beginning in late March or early April and ending in early to mid-June.

The program would also use kelts collected at Rock Island Dam, donated by Chelan PUD. Chelan PUD operates a juvenile bypass trap as part of normal sampling operations at the dam. During trapping, they may incidentally capture kelts, which are placed in a holding tank for YN staff to retrieve.

Once kelts are captured, YN would transport the kelts to the Methow Steelhead Kelt Facility in Winthrop, Washington, where they will be reconditioned (fed and given pathogen treatment) for six months. Successfully reconditioned kelts will be released near the mouth of the Methow River the following October.

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/ Michelle Guay

Michelle Guay
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
CorSource Technology Group

Reviewed by:

/s/ Gene Lyndard FOR

Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: July 13, 2018

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: Steelhead Kelt Reconditioning Project

Project Site Description

The weirs are located within the wetted perimeters of five streams: Little Bridge Creek, South Fork Gold Creek, Hancock Springs, Libby Creek, and Beaver Creek in Okanogan County, Washington. All sites are located in wooded areas near rural residences. One site (Little Bridge Creek) is located on the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.

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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No effect to historic properties as confirmed by DAHP on 2/19/13 (Gold and Hancock), 12/8/2014 (Beaver), 1/31/12 (Little Bridge Creek), and 8/21/14 (Libby).		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Earth disturbance would be minimal; limited to minor sedimentation when walking in streams and/or installing temporary weirs.		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> The project would not likely remove or disturb vegetation. Any disturbance to aquatic plants would be minimal and limited to activities such as walking in streams and/or installing temporary weirs.		
4. Wildlife (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> The project would increase noise and visual disturbance only minimally above ambient levels, and would not disturb earth or vegetation. Therefore, negligible effects on wildlife. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with this determination on 8/11/2017.		
5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including federal/state special-status species and ESUs)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Effects to water bodies would be minimal, limited to temporary, low-level sedimentation while walking in streams to install and remove weirs. There is potential to incidentally take listed salmon and steelhead during trapping; however, National Marine Fisheries Service issues a Determination of Take letter annually, indicating that the action would not jeopardize listed fish due to the mandatory conservation measures. Likewise, in a letter of concurrence dated 8/11/2017, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concurred that the action is not likely to adversely affect listed bull trout, because no or very few bull trout occur in the action area at the time of trapping. The action could potentially have a beneficial effect on listed fish by enhancing the survival of natural-origin steelhead.		

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| 6. Wetlands | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> None present. | | |
| 7. Groundwater and Aquifers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> The action would not use groundwater or change the hydrological regime. Therefore, no effect to groundwater and aquifers. | | |
| 8. Land Use and Specially Designated Areas | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> Land use would not change. The project is not located in a specially designated area or Wild and Scenic River. | | |
| 9. Visual Quality | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> There is no heavy construction, disposal of spoils, or removal of vegetation. The only potential visual impact would be the weirs operating in the stream each year from March through June. This would be a negligible, temporary visual impact. | | |
| 10. Air Quality | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> A negligible increase in vehicle emissions could occur as a result of the work. | | |
| 11. Noise | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> The action does not involve any use of heavy equipment; only hand tools. Therefore, the action would result in only a negligible increase in ambient noise. | | |
| 12. Human Health and Safety | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> Collection of steelhead would not result in any danger to human health or 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: One site, Little Bridge Creek, is located on National Forest land, and Yakama Nation has obtained a special use permit for use of this land. The other sites are located on private land, and Yakama Nation would coordinate with the landowners and to get their signatures or State permit, where needed.

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

Signed: /s/ Michelle Guay

Michelle Guay, ECF-4

Contract Environmental Protection Specialist

CorSource Technology Group

Date: July 13, 2018