

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Nez Perce Tribal Hatchery Spawning Ground Aerial Surveys

Project No.: 1983-350-03

Project Manager: Eric McOmie, EWU-4

Location: Nez Perce County, Idaho

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B3.2 Aviation activities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration proposed to fund the Nez Perce Tribe's Department of Fisheries Resource Management to conduct surveys of salmonid spawning grounds using small unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS, also known as drones) within the Snake River Basin. Data collected on returning anadromous adult Chinook salmon, steelhead, and coho salmon would be used for life history, abundance, and productivity monitoring. Spawning ground surveys would be single or multi-pass surveys conducted in areas where adults are likely to spawn on the mainstem Clearwater River, from the mouth to the North Fork Clearwater River. Helicopters would be used to calibrate the use of the sUAS. Spawning out carcasses detected aerially would be mapped and collected the same or following day.

Operators of the sUAS would follow FAA requirements, be certified with sUAS ratings, operate only during daylight hours, and would follow local and State laws related to remote sensing and aerial photography. Documented, written permission would be obtained before entering private property.

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/ Carolyn Sharp

Carolyn Sharp

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel
Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: September 23, 2019

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

Project activities entail the use of small unmanned aircraft systems/drones to aerially survey spawning grounds on the mainstem Clearwater River, from the mouth to the confluence with the North Fork Clearwater River. A helicopter would be used in the lower Clearwater to calibrate the use of the sUAS. Aerially-identified fish carcasses would be collected the same or following day.

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> Proposed action does not involve any ground disturbance.		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There are no ground-disturbing activities proposed with this action; thus, no potential to affect geology or soils.		
3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There are no ground-disturbing activities proposed with this action; thus, no potential to affect plants.		
4. Wildlife (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Effects to wildlife associated with noise of aircraft would be temporary and negligible. Aircraft would operate during daytime hours.		
5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Project activities include aerial surveys and collection of fish carcasses identified during the aerial surveys.		
6. Wetlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> The project would not disturb wetlands; therefore, no effect on wetlands.		
7. Groundwater and Aquifers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> The project does not involve ground disturbance; therefore, there would be no impact to groundwater or aquifers.		

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



Explanation: The underlying land use would not change as a result of this project. The project is not located in a specially-designated area or Wild and Scenic River.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: Visual effects from presence of aircraft would be temporary.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: There would be no effect to air quality; there may be a negligible amount of emissions from limited use of helicopters used to calibrate sUAS use.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: There would be only negligible increase in ambient noise. Aircraft noise would be minor and temporary and would occur during daylight hours.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: Aircraft operators would be required to follow Federal, State, and local regulatory practices and mandate that workers comply with OSHA health and safety standards.

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: Documented, written permission would be obtained before entering private property to include the airspace of the planned flightpath.

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

Signed: /s/ Carolyn Sharp
Carolyn Sharp, ECF-4
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: September 23, 2019