

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Data Collection in Columbia River Side Channel

Project No.: 1999-003-01

Project Manager: Christine Petersen, EWM-4

Location: Skamania County, WA

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: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) to research what conditions are necessary for successful spawning and rearing below the lower Columbia River Mainstem dams. Specifically, PNNL would collect data on the abundance, spatial and temporal distributions, and stock origins of spawning chum and fall Chinook salmon, as well as the emergence timing and emigration from local rearing areas. In addition, PNNL identifies operational and physical habitat factors affecting spawning.

PNNL would collect temperature and water level data at four previously installed piezometers located in a side channel of the Columbia River at River Mile 143, between the shoreline and Ives Island, and at the mouth of Hamilton Creek. Data would be recorded throughout the chum salmon spawning, incubation, and emergence time periods, mid-November to mid-April.

When data collection ends, all piezometers and related equipment would also be removed. The piezometers would be removed when the river level is low enough to walk to each piezometer location. A pipe wrench would be used to loosen the piezometer, and then the piezometer would be pulled straight out of the ground with no additional ground disturbance to the surrounding area. The above ground components of an unused telemetry station located on Pierce National Wildlife Refuge would also be dismantled with hand tools. Subsurface PVC pipe and cabling associated with the tower would be also be removed to a depth of 12 inches below the ground.

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/ Catherine Clark

Catherine Clark
Environmental Protection Specialist
Motus Recruiting and Staffing, INC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: January 21, 2020

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: Data Collection in Columbia River Side Channel

Project Site Description

The project is located in Skamania, Washington, approximately 1.5 miles southwest of North Bonneville, Washington, at the mouth of Hamilton Creek. The project area is within the Lower Columbia River system, with Pierce National Wildlife Refuge at the northern end. Vegetation in the project area consists of trees, shrubs, and riparian plants.

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> Installation of these piezometers were previously consulted on by the US Fish and Wildlife Service in 2003. BPA has determined that the proposed action would have no potential to effect historic properties.		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Soil disturbance would be minimal, limited to the minor excavation associated with the telemetry station removal.		
3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> The project would not remove or disturb vegetation. Therefore, no potential to affect plants, including Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed plants.		
4. Wildlife (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Temporary and minimal noise/human presence associated with data collection and equipment removal. Therefore, little to no effect on wildlife and no effect on sensitive wildlife species.		
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> There would be no effect to waterbodies, floodplains, or fish. Project involves data collection and non-mechanical removal of piezometers.		
6. Wetlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No wetlands would be disturbed.		
7. Groundwater and Aquifers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> The project would not result in an increase in groundwater use. The work would not change the hydrological regime and therefore, would not affect groundwater discharge.		

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



Explanation: A special use permit for research and monitoring was obtained from Pierce National Wildlife Refuge (Permit #19-007) by Pacific Northwest National Laboratory.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: No effect to visual quality, field equipment to be removed at the completion of data collection efforts.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Effects to air quality would be negligible; small amounts of emissions may be associated with use of boating equipment during data collection.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: There would be limited noise-generating activities associated with this project during equipment removal.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: The project activities would not mobilize previously undisturbed soils. Therefore, project activities would not uncover contaminated earth, mobilize fuel or chemical leaks, or disturb underground storage tanks.

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: Coordination has occurred with USFWS to conduct research and monitoring at Pierce National Wildlife Refuge and within the Lower Columbia River system at the base of Hamilton Creek.

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

Signed: /s/ Catherine Clark

Date: January 21, 2020

Catherine Clark, ECF-4
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Motus Recruiting and Staffing, INC