

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Fish Trapping, Marking, Sampling, and Removal Projects

**Project No.:** 1990-044-00

**Project Manager:** Lee Watts, EWM-4

**Location:** Kootenai and Benewah Counties, Idaho

**Categorical Exclusions Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):**

B1.20 Protection of Cultural Resources, Fish and Wildlife Habitat; B3.1 Site characterization and environmental monitoring

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration proposes to fund a number of fish trapping, marking, sampling, and removal projects in multiple locations in northern Idaho. All trapping and handling of fish are proposed for the protection of native westslope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus c. lewisii*), redband trout (*Oncorhynchus m. gairdneri*), and Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) and their habitat. The species handled, and the species protected differ at each location. These actions include:

1. Electrofishing removal of brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) from Benewah Creek and Evans Creek to prevent expansion of brook trout's range into adjacent areas supporting ESA-listed bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout. Brook trout compete with westslope cutthroat trout and interbreeds with bull trout, threatening their genetic integrity.
2. Gill net removal of northern pike (*Esox lucius*) from Lake Coeur d'Alene for protection of spawning westslope cutthroat trout that migrate through the lake to spawn in the lake's tributaries. The capture and removal of northern pike would be done using shoreline gillnetting by foot and by boat.
3. Trap and pit-tag adfluvial juvenile and adult westslope cutthroat trout using fixed weir traps in Lake and Benewah Creek watersheds to monitor population trends.
4. Electrofishing to sample all salmonids in stream reaches of Lake Creek and Evans Creek watersheds to assess effectiveness of past and ongoing habitat improvement projects in those watersheds.
5. Trap, sample, and pit tag redband trout and other salmonid species in Hangman Creek Watershed.
6. Electrofishing to remove non-native cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii*) to prevent interbreeding with redband trout in Hangman Creek Watershed.

The actions would be taken in multiple locations in many different creeks and watersheds in Benewah and Kootenai Counties. The attached table (Attachment 1) displays the actions and the creek and watershed locations in which they would occur.

**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/ Robert W. Shull

Robert W Shull  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
CorSource Technology Group

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel  
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey Grange  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: June 3, 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:** Fish Trapping, Marking, Sampling, and Removal Projects

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## Project Site Description

Project activities would take place along the shores of Lake Coeur d'Alene, and along stream courses in Lake, Evans, Benewah, and Hangman Creek watersheds. The shoreline of Lake Coeur d'Alene is forested with mature or old growth conifer forests. The capture and sample sites in the creeks are within mature forest, or in sites harvested for timber or within an agricultural/grazing setting resembling large openings within a larger forested landscape.

## Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. <b>Historic and Cultural Resources</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> This project does not involve ground disturbance of any kind. There is no potential to affect cultural resources.		
2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There is no ground disturbance associated with these actions, and, therefore, no potential to affect geology and soils.		
3. <b>Plants</b> (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> The proposed action does not include any vegetation management, ground disturbance, or actions that would impact vegetation. Therefore, there is no potential to affect plant communities.		
4. <b>Wildlife</b> (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There would be temporary disturbance and displacement of wildlife in the immediate area of the proposed actions due to noise and human presence. However, the actions are short-term (hours/days) and habitat would not be altered (no ground or vegetation disturbance). There would be no long-term effect on wildlife or their habitat. No ESA-listed wildlife species are present in the project areas.		

5. **Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish**

(including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)

Explanation: Native fish would be trapped and handled, and some would be measured, adipose fin-clipped, or pit-tagged. Non-native fish (northern pike, brook trout, and non-native cutthroat trout) would be intentionally removed. Non-target, native, fish captured during any of these actions would be immediately released to maximize survival.

ESA-listed bull trout are present in the Coeur d'Alene watershed, but they are not present in any of the creeks, subwatersheds, or lake areas proposed for electrofishing, trapping, or gillnetting. All project locations are above the reach of anadromous salmonids. The activities would have no effect on ESA-listed fish species.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: The project would not take place within or around wetlands, and therefore no potential to affect wetlands

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: No groundwater withdrawal would occur, and no discharge of pollutants. There would be no effect on groundwater or aquifers.

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

Explanation: There would be no changes to land use or impacts to specially-designated areas, and no potential to affect land use or specially-designated areas.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: Occupancy of the site by trucks and people may temporarily intrude on what would otherwise be a natural landscape. Effect would be for hours or days only. There would be no change to the vegetation or landform, and no erection of new structures and thus no change to visual quality.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: There would be minor and temporary generation of emissions associated with motor boat use and vehicular traffic to the action locations.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: Minor and temporary intermittent noise would occur during trapping actions which would be during daylight hours only. Noise type and level would be consistent with the surrounding setting.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: All proposed actions involve working in and around water, which poses some risk to human health and safety. But all actions are standard and customary fisheries management activities that would follow accepted practices that ensure safe working conditions and would mitigate for the risks inherent in outdoor work and work on the water (gloves and boots in the woods, protective gear when electrofishing, life-jackets when boating, etc.).

### 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:

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### **Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Description: Project activities would occur on open water for which no special permissions are required, on tribal lands by tribal members requiring no formal notifications, and on private lands within the reservation on which long-term stream restoration actions have been implemented with long-standing cooperation with and permission from the landowner.

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

Signed: /s/ Robert W. Shull

Date: June 3, 2020

Robert W Shull  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist (If CFTE)  
CorSource Technology Group

**Attachment 1 Actions, target fish, and locations of proposed actions corresponding to numbered items in the Proposed Action**

Action	Target fish	Water body	Locations (Lat / Long)*
1. Trap, electrofish, and remove	Non-native brook trout and non-native cutthroat trout	Numerous locations in Benewah Creek and Evans Creek in the Benewah Creek watershed	47.234339 / -116.784081 47.229619 / -116.785995 47.225129 / -116.790220 47.448522 / -116.568031 47.456570 / -116.578657
2. Trap and remove	Non-native northern pike	Lake Coeur d'Alene	47.480437 / -116.900196 47.371385 / -116.740036
3. Trap and pit-tag in Lake Creek	Westslope cutthroat trout	Lake Creek Watershed	47.489468 / -116.998758
3. Trap and pit-tag in Benewah Creek	Westslope cutthroat trout	Benewah Creek Watershed	47.252570 / -116.758233
4. Sample by electrofishing in Lake Creek; fin clip and pit tag some samples for genetics analysis	All salmonid species	Bozard subbasin and Upper Fork subbasin of the Lake Creek Watershed	47.548096 / -117.037239 47.550087 / -117.037485 47.553333 / -117.039166 47.557384 / -117.039185 47.560488 / -117.041308 47.590999 / -117.042581 47.542000 / -117.025000 47.549000 / -117.023000 47.551831 / -117.023648 47.552421 / -117.021571 47.554000 / -117.016000
4. Sample by electrofishing in Evans Creek; fin clip and pit tag some samples for genetics analysis	All salmonid species	Evans Creek in Evans Creek Watershed	47.429164 / -116.531343 47.456565 / -116.578657 47.449684 / -116.570566 47.447457 / -116.566682 47.441780 / -116.563434 47.440201 / -116.555607 47.439887 / -116.548773 47.437042 / -116.545863 47.433050 / -116.540993 47.429599 / -116.536900 47.426703 / -116.533803 47.424377 / -116.529808 47.417352 / -116.517538
4. Sample by electrofishing; fin clip and pit tag some samples for genetics analysis	Redband trout	Mission Creek, West Fork Mission Creek, Sheep Creek, Nehchen Creek, Middle Fork Smith Creek, Indian Creek, Bunnell Creek, and Hangman Creek in Hangman Creek Watershed	47.101701 / -116.942623 47.089354 / -116.945874 47.085008 / -116.947235 47.098806 / -116.952730 47.117830 / -116.872524 47.097557 / -116.895302 47.096790 / -116.898177 47.093164 / -116.901568 47.159165 / -116.803125 47.162158 / -116.799899 47.060855 / -116.834080 47.056806 / -116.831406 47.061135 / -116.820089 47.102932 / -116.803752 47.107401 / -116.797239 47.113666 / -116.779315 47.115595 / -116.775692 47.133289 / -116.759995 47.127516 / -116.761893 47.130464 / -116.764517 47.134571 / -116.765944 47.116812 / -116.726820 47.104911 / -116.811605 47.101460 / -116.799503 47.097222 / -116.790941 47.105927 / -116.740000 47.109959 / -116.730585

Action	Target fish	Water body	Locations(Lat / Long)*
5. Trap redband trout and non-native salmonids using migration traps (fin clip and pit tag some samples for genetics analysis)	Redband trout	Indian and Nechen Creeks in Hangman Creek Watershed	47.132994 / -116.843918 47.113666 / -116.779315
6. Remove non-native cutthroat trout using electrofishing	Non-native cutthroat trout	Nechen Creek in Hangman Creek Watershed	47.131418 / -116.844012 47.159165 / -116.803125 47.162171 / -116.799947
*These locations(latitude and longitude) indicate centers of action areas around which actions would be taken; actions would not be limited to that specific lat/long point.			