Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: Lower Columbia Coded Wire Tag Recovery

Project No.: 2010-036-00

Project Manager: Eric Andersen

Location: Multiple Counties, Oregon and 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: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to continue funding Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), and Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission (PSMFC) for ongoing work on the research, monitoring and evaluation of existing Coded Wire Tag (CWT) recovery program in the Columbia River Basin. These activities are used to fulfill commitments begun under the 2008 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries Federal Columbia River Power System Biological Opinion (as supplemented in 2010 and 2014) (2008 BiOp) and ongoing commitments under the 2019 NOAA Fisheries Columbia River System BiOp (2019 CRS BiOp).

There are three components to these salmon monitoring and conservation efforts. The first component is Viable Salmonid Population (VSP) monitoring of listed Chinook and coho populations in Washington's Lower Columbia River (LCR) Evolutionary Significant Unit. The second component includes fisheries sampling for tags and marks in the mainstem Columbia River and tributary fisheries. The final component includes run reconstruction, which is used to evaluate past fishery and conservation planning for the following year. The PSMFC portion of this project would be primarily focused on the latter two components, with less emphasis on VSP monitoring, while the WDFW portion is primarily focused on VSP monitoring.

- **VSP Monitoring.** CWT recovery in Washington's LCR tributaries along with monitoring to estimate Chinook and coho salmon abundance, diversity, and spatial structure. This data would be used to assess status, conservation efforts, fishery impacts, and evaluate hatchery programs.

- **CWT and PIT tag Fisheries Sampling.** Oregon and Washington carry out a coordinated sampling effort to collect CWTs from mature salmon and steelhead, which return to fishery (sport and commercial) and escapement areas (natural spawning grounds, hatcheries, and Bonneville Dam fishways) throughout the Columbia River Basin. Sampled heads of tagged fish would be transported to tag recovery labs at Clackamas and Olympia where the CWTs would be recovered and decoded. The CWT recovery and catch/sample information would then be forwarded to the PSMFC Regional Mark Processing Center where it would be validated and made available to users via the on-line 'Regional Mark Information System' (RMIS).

- **Run reconstruction.** CWT recovery data would be used with total catch and escapement estimates to produce stock and age compositions for each fishery and escapement area and to estimate total returns by stock and age. The return by stock and age estimates provide the basis for annually estimating the return to the Columbia River mouth for all major salmonid stocks, including stocks listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Annual abundance estimates plus fishery stock and age composition data are essential for monitoring the status of wild/natural and hatchery produced salmonid stocks in the Columbia River basin.

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
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Motus Recruiting and Staffing, inc.

Reviewed by: Chad Hamel

/s/Chad Hamel
Chad Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange *07/21/2020*
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: Lower Columbia Coded Wire Tag Recovery

Project Site Description

All activities would occur at existing facilities along the Lower Columbia River and tributaries in Oregon and Washington.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No Potential for Significance

Explanation: There would be no ground disturbing activities or structure modifications, thus the proposed activities would not have the potential to affect historic properties or cultural resources. All work would be carried out from existing facilities or at existing field sites.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No Potential for Significance

Explanation: No ground disturbing activities proposed, thus the proposed activities do not have the potential to affect geology and soils. All work would be carried out from existing facilities or at existing field sites.

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

Potential for Significance: No Potential for Significance

Explanation: No ground disturbing or vegetation removal activities proposed. All work would be carried out from within existing facilities or at existing facilities or at existing field sites associated with tributaries to the Columbia River in Oregon and Washington.

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

Potential for Significance: No Potential for Significance

Explanation: No special status or ESA-listed wildlife species or habitat would be negatively impacted by the stream pedestrian survey and collection activities. Wildlife may be temporarily disturbed and displaced by human presence during activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No Potential for Significance

Explanation: Harvest monitoring would take place at the mainstem Columbia River sport and commercial fisheries, and tributary-level sport fisheries; therefore, given that the sampling occurs on previously-harvested and killed salmon and steelhead (carcasses), there would be no take associated with these sampling activities. These activities have no effect on ESA-listed species.

Population abundance and spawning composition of LCR salmon surveys would occur but any live adult salmon observed during spawning ground surveys would not be negatively impacted because the effects would be negligible or no effect as adults temporarily move away from observers.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No Potential for Significance

Explanation: No ground disturbing activities are proposed thus the action does not have the potential to impact wetlands. All work would be carried out within existing facilities.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No Potential for Significance

Explanation: No ground disturbing activities that may affect groundwater or aquifers are proposed.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No Potential for Significance

Explanation: Access to field sites would be on existing road networks and all activities would be compatible with local land use on public lands.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No Potential for Significance

Explanation: The proposed action would not impact visual quality as the action would be occurring within existing facilities. No new equipment or installation would occur.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No Potential for Significance

Explanation: Minor, temporary generation of emissions associated with vehicular operations during travel to facilities.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No Potential for Significance

Explanation: All work would be carried out at existing facilities and would not result in an increase in ambient noise.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No Potential for Significance

Explanation: All work would be carried out at existing facilities. Those performing coded-wire tag removal would be properly training in equipment management techniques. The activity is

not considered hazardous nor should it result in any health or safety risks to the general public.

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: No notification necessary because all work would be occurring at existing facilities and public land locations. If access across private land was needed PSMFC and WDFW would work with land owners before accessing.

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* *07/21/2020*

Catherine Clark, ECF-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Motus Recruiting and Staffing, Inc.