Pacific Lamprey Artificial Propagation and Release Research Project

Finding of No Significant Impact
Bonneville Power Administration
DOE/EA 2104
May 2021

INTRODUCTION

Bonneville Power Administration (Bonneville) announces its environmental findings for its proposal to fund the Confederated Bands and Tribes of the Yakama Nation (YN) and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation to implement a program intended to evaluate the feasibility of artificial propagation and release for early life stage (egg, prolarva, larva, and juvenile) Pacific lamprey in the Yakima, Walla Walla, and Tucannon subbasins. The program is designed to be a scientific experiment that would evaluate the feasibility of using artificial propagation techniques as future enhancement actions for Pacific lamprey in the Columbia River Basin.

Bonneville developed an environmental assessment (EA) evaluating the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative. The EA was released for a 15-day public comment period beginning January 25, 2021. Three public letters were received.

Based on the analysis and public comments received, Bonneville determined that the Proposed Action is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 (42 United States Code [USC] 4321 *et seq.*). The Proposed Action is not the type of action that normally requires preparation of an EIS and is not without precedent. Therefore, the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required and Bonneville is issuing this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Proposed Action.

PUBLIC AVAILABILITY

The FONSI will be posted on Bonneville's project website: *http://www.bpa.gov/goto/PacificLamprey.*

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Action Alternative, Bonneville would not fund the Pacific Lamprey Artificial Propagation and Release Research Project.

ALTERNATIVE 2- PROPOSED ACTION

Under the Proposed Action, presented in Chapter 2.1 of the EA, Bonneville would fund the Pacific Lamprey Artificial Propagation and Release Research Project to evaluate the feasibility of using artificial propagation and release for early life stage (egg, prolarva, larva, and juvenile) Pacific lamprey in the Yakima, Walla Walla, and Tucannon subbasins (EA Section 2.1). This program would be a scientific experiment that would evaluate the feasibility of using artificial propagation techniques as future enhancement actions for Pacific lamprey in the Columbia River Basin.

Existing facilities at the Water and Environmental Center (WEC) facility at Walla Walla Community College and at Prosser Hatchery would be used to spawn adult lamprey and incubate/rear fertilized eggs to the desired life stage prior to release. Following release, lamprey would be monitored to determine habitat use, growth, densities, movements, and survival over the next 5-10 years. Releases of early life stage lamprey would occur in the spring (April/May/June/July) and fall (September/October). Post-release monitoring at release sites would be monitored twice soon after release to evaluate any movements or significant mortality. After that, release sites would be monitored annually.

SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTION

To determine whether the Proposed Action has the potential to cause significant environmental effects, Bonneville analyzed the potential impacts of the proposal on human and natural resources and presented them in Chapter 3 of the EA. The potential impacts associated with the Proposed Action are summarized below. The Proposed Action would have no significant impacts and the following resource discussion provides a summary of the potential impacts and the reasons these impacts would not be significant.

Fish

The Proposed Action would not pose risks to natural-origin salmon and steelhead (see Section 3.1.4 of the EA). Because of the low frequencies and low voltages used when electrofishing to capture larval lamprey, compared to those used to capture salmon and steelhead, there would be a low, if any, adverse effects. Additionally, the stream habitat utilized by juvenile lamprey is located in low velocity areas with mud/silt substrate. These areas are not the same habitat used by salmon and steelhead for spawning or juvenile rearing so the potential for effects from researchers walking in the streams is also low.

Best management practices (BMPs) (e.g., waders, boots, and any other gear to be used in or near water would be cleaned, washed, and inspected prior to entering the water; and wading boots with felt soles would not be used) would be utilized to minimize any potential for increasing the population of aquatic invasive species. Two release sites would be located in areas used by ESA-listed bull trout for spawning and rearing habitat. BMPs, agreed to in an informal consultation with the USFWS that was competed on February 21, 2021, would be implemented to further minimize effects to bull trout. These BMPs would be:

- Monitoring activities would take place when air and water temperatures are coolest (prioritize for mornings when feasible),
- Researchers would conduct a careful visual survey of the area to be sampled before beginning electrofishing to determine if any fish are present,
- Electrofishing session would start with all settings (voltage, pulse width, and pulse rate) set to the minimums needed to capture lamprey,
- Electrofishing would not occur in turbid water where visibility is poor (i.e. unable to see the bed of the stream).

For these reasons, adverse effects to other fish species would be low (see Section 3.1.4 of the EA).

Wildlife

While the release of larval lamprey and the associated post-release monitoring activities could temporarily displace some animals found in and around riverine habitat areas, the Proposed Action may temporarily displace these animals. However, these animals would likely return or be replaced by other individuals of the same types of species once activities ceased. For this reason, adverse effects to wildlife would be low (see Section 3.2.2 of the EA).

Land Use and Recreation

Because all of the activities planned at each of the release sites would occur within the ordinary high water level for the rivers and access would utilize existing roads, the Proposed Action would have no effect on existing land uses (see Section 3.3.2 of the EA).

Although recreational activities may occur on the rivers where release sites are located, releases and monitoring activities would occur in a relative small area along each of the rivers in areas on river margins in four feet or less in depth. Because of the short duration and limited spatial extent of the proposed activities, adverse effects to recreation would be low.

Socioeconomics

The Proposed Action would not create income opportunities, so the socioeconomic effects would be low (see Section 3.4.2 of the EA).

Environmental Justice

The Proposed Action is not expected to have adverse human health or environmental effects. There would not be any disproportionate adverse effects for disadvantaged low-income or minority populations (see Section 3.4.2 of the EA).

DETERMINATION

Based on the information in the EA, as summarized here, Bonneville determines that the Proposed Action is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of NEPA (42 USC 4321 et seq.). Therefore, an EIS will not be prepared and Bonneville is issuing this FONSI for the Proposed Action.

Issued in Portland, Oregon.

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SCOTT G. ARMENTROUT
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