

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Hungry Horse Mitigation – Creston Hatchery

Project No.: 1991-019-04

Project Manager: Cecilia Brown, EWM-4

Location: Flathead, Lake, and Missoula Counties, Montana

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.20 Protection of cultural resources, fish, and wildlife habitat

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to continue funding the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to produce and stock fish for mitigation purposes under the Hungry Horse Dam Fishery Mitigation Plan from the Creston National Fish Hatchery (CNFH) in northwestern Montana. The USFWS would acquire genetically-pure native westslope cutthroat and rainbow trout eggs; incubate and hatch the eggs; rear 4”-7” yearlings; monitor, examine, and treat fish health issues; and distribute up to 100,000 fish of each species annually in closed basin waters of the Flathead River system. The numbers of fish and stocking locations would be determined and requested by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe (CSKT) and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) fishery resource managers. The USFWS would also maintain the CNFH office and rearing facilities, water conveyance structures, and distribution vehicles.

Funding for this project would assist BPA in providing benefits to Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed bull trout from hatchery projects, while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the FCRPS on fish and wildlife in the mainstem Columbia River and its tributaries pursuant to the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act of 1980 (the Northwest Power Act) (16 USC (USC) 839 et seq.).

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/ Brenda Aguirre

Brenda Aguirre
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel May 19, 2021

Sarah T. Biegel 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.

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Project Site Description

Project activities would take place at the USFWS CNFH approximately 15 miles east of Kalispell, MT in Flathead County and within closed-basin lakes throughout the Flathead Valley on the Flathead Reservation and state lands in Flathead, Lake, and Missoula Counties. The Flathead Valley is part of the Flathead Subbasin located in the northern most portion of the Pend Oreille River Basin. The Pend Oreille River is a tributary to the Columbia River. The Flathead Subbasin is dominated by forested mountain ranges and agricultural farmland.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All proposed activities have been evaluated and determined to have no potential to affect historic or cultural resources (MT 2021 009).

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work in existing hatchery and lakes managed for recreational fishing; no soil disturbance would occur.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: ESA-listed Spalding's catchfly and water howellia and state special-status whitebark pine generally occur in the action area; there would be no effect with the conditions listed below.

Note:

- USFWS approved the Intra-Service Section 7 Biological Evaluation for the Creston National Fish Hatchery. Assistant Regional Director of Ecological Services in Denver concurred with a "no effect" determination for the BPA-funded Hungry Horse Dam Fishery Mitigation fish stocking project at the Creston NFH on 12-09-2005. USFWS determined through annual consultation that the requirements for this project have no negative impact on native species or natural fish spawning populations. USFWS provided BPA environmental staff with a copy of the original final consultation finding. These findings would remain valid until conditions or program objectives change. (T. Slivka, USFWS, 1/14/2020).

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: ESA-listed Canada lynx and critical habitat, grizzly bear, and meltwater lednia stonefly generally occur in the action area; there would be no effect with the conditions listed below.

Notes:

- USFWS approved the Intra-Service Section 7 Biological Evaluation for the Creston National Fish Hatchery. Assistant Regional Director of Ecological Services in Denver concurred with a "no effect" determination for the BPA-funded Hungry Horse Dam Fishery Mitigation fish stocking project at the Creston NFH on 12-09-2005. USFWS determined through annual consultation that the requirements for this project have no negative impact on native species or natural fish spawning populations. USFWS provided BPA environmental staff with a copy of the original final consultation finding. These findings would remain valid until conditions or program objectives change. (T. Slivka, USFWS, 1/14/2020).

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: All work in existing hatchery and lakes managed for recreational fishing; no floodplain disturbance would occur. Minimal impacts to water bodies would occur from the discharge of water from the hatchery and stocking of lakes with fish. ESA-listed bull trout and critical habitat generally occur in the action area. There would be no effect to water bodies or bull trout with the conditions listed below.

Notes:

- USFWS would follow all terms and conditions in their hatchery discharge permit (MTG130007) from the Montana Department of Environmental Quality, renewed annually, and use water treated at the hatchery to hold fish for stocking.
- Stocking would only occur in closed basin lakes, managed for recreational fishing, where impacts to wild stocks are negligible. Appropriate fish species are being used and managed properly. Management agencies (CSKT, MFWP) have adequate monitoring and evaluation. An added benefit to wild fish is possible due to a reduction in mortality to these species as a result of enhanced alternative fishing opportunities. MFWP has studied the potential for damage to organisms such as amphibians in the stocked waters and has concluded that it is not a problem.
- USFWS approved the Intra-Service Section 7 Biological Evaluation for the Creston National Fish Hatchery. Assistant Regional Director of Ecological Services in Denver concurred with a "no effect" determination for the BPA-funded Hungry Horse Dam Fishery Mitigation fish stocking project at the Creston NFH on 12-09-2005. USFWS determined through annual consultation that the requirements for this project have no negative impact on native species or natural fish spawning populations. USFWS provided BPA environmental staff with a copy of the original final consultation finding. These findings would remain valid until conditions or program objectives change. (T. Slivka, USFWS, 1/14/2020).

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work in existing hatchery and lakes managed for recreational fishing; no wetland disturbance would occur.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work in existing hatchery and lakes managed for recreational fishing; no groundwater or aquifer disturbance would occur.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work in existing hatchery and lakes managed for recreational fishing; no change to land use would occur.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work in existing hatchery and lakes managed for recreational fishing; no change to visual quality would occur.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work in existing hatchery and lakes managed for recreational fishing; no change to air quality would occur.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work in existing hatchery and lakes managed for recreational fishing; no change to noise level would occur.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work in existing hatchery and lakes managed for recreational fishing; no change to human health and safety would occur. All applicable safety regulations would be followed during work activities.

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: The USFWS would coordinate all work on reservation and state lands with the CSKT and MFWP fishery resource managers respectively. The USFWS is the landowner for the hatchery lands.

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

Signed: /s/ Brenda Aguirre May 19, 2021
Brenda Aguirre, ECF-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist