

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Genetic Monitoring and Evaluation Program for Salmon and Steelhead

**Project No.:** 1989-096-00

**Project Manager:** Amy Mai – EWU-4

**Location:** Blaine, Custer, Idaho and Valley counties, Idaho; Union and Wallowa counties, Oregon; Asotin, Columbia and Franklin counties, Washington

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B3.3 Research related to conservation of fish, wildlife and cultural resources.

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration proposes to fund the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's ongoing monitoring and evaluation of genetic characteristics of supplemented salmonid populations. The project monitors genetic changes associated with hatchery propagation in multiple Snake River sub-basins for Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*) and steelhead (*O. mykiss*), reproductive success for individual families and groups of fish, and investigate the efficacy of using eDNA to measure population-level allele frequencies. Co-managers are Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), Nez Perce Tribe, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Idaho department of Fish and Game (IDFG), and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes (Tribes).

The project co-managers would collect adults and juvenile fish via electrofishing and permanent weirs for genetic analysis of tissue samples. Data collected at 'Tier 2' sites would determine use changes in gene frequencies through time in hatchery, natural and wild Chinook salmon and steelhead populations to evaluate the genetic effects of hatchery supplementation on a broad geographic scale. Data collected at 'Tier 3' sites help determine the relative reproductive success of hatchery fish spawning in the wild by using parentage analysis to construct pedigrees.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills commitments under the 2020 National Marine Fisheries Service Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS CRS BiOp). These actions would support conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the 2020 ESA consultation with USFWS on the O&M of the Columbia River System, 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 (Northwest Power Act) (16 U.S.C. (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/ Israel Duran

Israel Duran  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Salient/CRGT

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad Hamel

Chad Hamel  
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange                      April 11, 2022

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:** Genetic Monitoring and Evaluation Program for Salmon and Steelhead

## **Project Site Description**

Trapping and electrofishing would occur within the Snake River Basin, primarily on the Imnaha, Grande Ronde, and Salmon river basins throughout Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. Sample processing would occur in existing facilities and labs.

## **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is no ground disturbance planned and there would be no impacts to historic or cultural resources as a result of these actions.

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is no ground disturbance planned and therefore geology and soils would not be impacted by the proposed activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no anticipated impacts to any plant species, and none exist within the immediate area of impact.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some of the project areas has potential to contain Yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), and North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*) habitat (USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC), 2021). However, due to past anthropological activities, these listed species and their critical habitats are not present within the project area; therefore, there would be no effect on ESA-listed species or critical habitats. Any impacts to non-listed wildlife species would be limited to the immediate site where there would be a temporary, small decrease in available habitat and temporary elevated noise disturbance. No other special status wildlife species were identified within the project areas.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would not require any activities that would impact water or floodplains for the completion of the work. The work involves take of Federally-listed Snake River Chinook salmon and steelhead, authorized under NMFS ESA Sec 10 permit (series 13382) and bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) authorized by the USFWS (BO 14420-2009-F-0492).

**6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some proposed actions could take place within or near wetlands. However, no ground disturbance would occur as a result of the proposed actions. Therefore, the proposed actions would not impact wetlands.

**7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance would occur as a result of the proposed actions. Therefore, the proposed actions would not impact groundwater and aquifers.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change in land use and no impact to specially-designated areas.

**9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The activities would not impact visual quality of the project areas.

**10. Air Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Air quality may be temporarily affected by emissions and dust from vehicular travel to project locations.

**11. Noise**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary noise could increase at field sites from vehicle and equipment use and human presence. However, these actions would be consistent with current activities typical of the field sites. All other proposed project activities would occur indoors at existing laboratory facilities. There would be no permanent change in ambient noise.

**12. Human Health and Safety**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Individuals carrying out the proposed actions would be trained in proper techniques and equipment use. The project would not generate or use hazardous materials and would not create conditions that would increase risk to human health and safety. No impacts to human health and safety are expected as a result of the proposed actions.

### **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 landowner notification, involvement, or coordination would be required as work would be implemented on property or sites that are owned and/or managed by the previously identified co-managers.

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

Signed: /s/ Israel Duran April 11, 2022  
Israel Duran, ECF-4 Date  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Salient/CRGT