Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: East Fork Salmon River Passive Integrated Transponder Tag Array Installation Project

Project No.: 2008-904-00

Project Manager: Verl Miller, EWM-4

Location: Challis County, Idaho

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 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 fund the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation (Shoshone-Bannock Tribes) to install a Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tag array within the East Fork Salmon River to monitor the movement, survival, growth, and behavior of juvenile and adult salmon.

The project proposes to install a new PIT array in the East Fork Salmon River. The array would be installed between July 15 and August 15, 2026. An array consists of multiple antennas in one or two rows that span the river and collect directional PIT tag data from migrating fish to assess population status and trends of salmonids and effectiveness of habitat improvement projects. Installation includes instream and upland elements. Most activities would take place within the existing stream channel and adjacent bank below the ordinary high-water mark. Proposed work involves trenching the stream bottom perpendicular to the channel to install parallel instream array spans and trenching the nearshore streambank to install conduit-encased cables connecting the instream spans to a master controller positioned outside the floodplain. Instream components would include approximately four 3-foot-wide and 20-foot-long antennas anchored into the streambed via anchor kits. The antennas would be constructed of black PVC and installed flush with the stream bottom to maintain the substrate's natural profile.

Power for the system would be sourced with a solar kit featuring solar panels, a battery system, and a thermoelectric generator placed adjacent to the master controller. Solar panels and associated equipment would be placed on a free-standing platform with duckbill cable anchors that would not require digging holes or using concrete for posts. Entrenched cables enclosed in 3/4-inch superflex conduit would connect instream antennas to the master controller/electronic monitoring equipment, spanning approximately 100 feet from each array span. Excavations for cable entrenchment typically measure 4 inches in width and 4 to 8 inches in depth and would be completed by hand. The project area would be accessed on foot by utilizing existing ranch or public access roads, vehicle pullouts; no road improvements are needed. Future activities may include removal and replacement of cables and hardware equipment consistent with the type of equipment originally installed.

Funding the proposed activities fulfills commitments under the National Marine Fisheries Service's Columbia River System Biological Opinion (2020 NMFS' 2020 CRS BiOp) and supports the conservation of ESA-listed species considered in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Columbia River System BiOp (USFWS' 2020 CRS BiOp). These actions also support Bonneville's commitments to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes in the Columbia River Fish Accord, as amended, while also supporting ongoing efforts to mitigate for effects of the Federal Columbia River Power System 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 1021.102 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; 89 FR 34074, April 30, 2024; 90 FR 29676, July 3, 2025, Interim Final Rule) and the current *DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Procedures*, BPA has determined the following:

1) The proposed action fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021;
2) The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion; and
3) There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal (see attached Environmental Evaluation).

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

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Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

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FOR Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Evaluation

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Evaluation

This evaluation 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: East Fork Salmon River Passive Integrated Transponder Tag Array Installation Project

Project Site Description

Installation would occur in the East Fork Salmon River, about 17 miles southwest of Challis, in Custer County, Idaho on US Bureau of Land Management-managed property. The installation area would be located in Township 11 North, Range 18 East, Sections 22. The East Fork Salmon River is a 34-mile-long tributary of the Salmon River, flowing through Custer County, Idaho. It joins the Salmon River about 4 miles east of Clayton, Idaho and 17 miles southwest of Challis. The East Fork Salmon River is formed at the confluence of the West Fork East Fork Salmon River and the South Fork East Fork Salmon River between the Boulder and White Cloud mountains in Sawtooth National Recreation Area and supports a diverse array of native fishes; however, past and current land management activities (i.e. timber harvesting and mining) have impacted areas critical to their survival. There are camping, mining, and other recreational activities within a several mile radius of the installation site.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA made a determination of no adverse effect to historic properties on April 3, 2026 (BPA CR Project No.: ID 20205 040) which was sent to consulting partners Idaho State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes. BPA received SHPO concurrence for the determination on April 10, 2026. On May 3, 2026 the consultation period ended without response from the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes.

Notes:

- A cultural resources monitor would be present during ground-disturbing activities, and monitoring report is provided to consulting parties.
- The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes would coordinate scheduling and monitoring with BPA and Bureau of Land Management archaeologists.
- In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA will require that work be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA and in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, short-term soil disturbance from instream antenna placement and trenching for cables. All work would be done with hand tools to minimize impacts. The control box for the PIT tag array would sit atop the ground, resulting in no soil disturbance.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no listed plant species within the Project area (US Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Consultation [IPaC], 2026). No other Federal or State special-status plant species are within the project sites. Streamside equipment may require minor disturbance to nearby plants that are hindering installation, but no broad-scale vegetation removal is proposed.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*) and North American wolverine (*Gulo gulo luscus*) are potentially present (IPaC, 2026) in the project area but are not known to exist within the Project area. The monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) and Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee (*Bombus suckleyi*) are proposed for ESA listing and may be in the Project area, but there is no potential habitat or designated critical habitat for either species present in the limited disturbance area. No other Federal or State special-status species or habitat are known to exist on the project site; therefore, there would be no impact from the installation of the PIT tag array and its associated parts. Wildlife may be temporarily displaced by construction noise during implementation or maintenance but would return to the project area once after construction.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: ESA-listed fish species Snake River spring/summer Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), Snake River steelhead (*O. mykiss*), bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) and designated critical habitat for each species are present (IPAC and Streamnet.org, 2026). Minor, short-term disturbance to fish may occur during array installation. The amount of sediment displacement would be low and the reconstructed instream environment would be recolonized by fish and other aquatic organisms in a matter of hours to days. Project-related impacts to ESA-listed species are addressed in BPA's Habitat Improvement Program (HIP) biological opinions with NMFS and USFWS. The array would be installed with best management practices designed to minimize the severity and duration of temporary water quality impacts in accordance with the conditions of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and State of Idaho's joint Nationwide Permit 27 for Aquatic Habitat Restoration, Establishment, and Enhancement Activities. No action proposed would permanently physically alter any aquatic habitat on site. There would be no adverse physical changes to water bodies, floodplains, or fish resulting from the proposed action. The PIT tag arrays would allow the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes to monitor fish movement, survival, growth, and behavior of tagged fish in order to inform scientific research, fisheries management, and conservation programs.

Notes:

- Shoshone-Bannock Tribes would adhere to the HIP and NWP27 Terms and Conditions and Conservation Measures during installation.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands within the project area; thus, the action does not have the potential to impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Only minor ground-disturbing activities are proposed and the actions would not result in an increase in groundwater use. The work would not change the hydrological regime and, therefore, would not affect groundwater recharge.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Access to field sites is on existing road networks and all activities are compatible with local land use. Land use would not change. The project is not located in a specially-designated area or Wild and Scenic River.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Short-term changes to the landscape would occur during construction, such as work zone conditions, vehicles, and equipment. Therefore, the proposed action would not have a permanent impact on visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A temporary increase in emissions and dust from vehicles accessing the project site would be very minor and short-term during construction. A negligible amount of temporary dust and vehicle emissions could be generated during project activities. Emissions and dust levels would return to normal conditions immediately once the project is completed.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would result in a temporary increase in ambient noise. Any noise emitted from construction equipment would be short-term and temporary during daylight hours and would cease following project completion.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work is not considered hazardous, nor does it result in any health or safety risks to the general public. Personnel are trained in proper equipment management techniques, and all applicable safety regulations would be followed. There would be no soil contamination or hazardous conditions and no CERCLA sites exist within the project area.

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 project actions are proposed by the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes to be implemented on public property in coordination with Bureau of Land Management.

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

Signed: ISRAEL DURAN Digitally signed by ISRAEL DURAN Date: 2026.08.03 09:18:29 -07'00'

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