

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Palisades Creek Rainbow Trout and Cutthroat Hybrid Trout Removal

**Project No.:** 2007-170-00

**Project Manager:** Jennifer Lord, EWM-4

**Location:** Bonneville County, Idaho

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B1.20 Protection of cultural resources, fish and wildlife habitat; B3.3 Research related to conservation of fish and wildlife

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) to survey species populations and remove rainbow trout (RBT) and cutthroat hybrid trout from Palisades Creek. The proposed actions would contribute to on-going efforts on the South Fork Snake River to preserve the genetic integrity and promote growth of Yellowstone cutthroat trout (YCT) populations. Funding these actions would support BPA's commitments to the State of Idaho under the 2018 Columbia River Fish Accord Extension agreement, 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.).

In late summer, during base flow, a minimum of one electrofishing pass would occur in Palisades Creek to remove RBT and cutthroat hybrids. RBT and RBT hybrids captured during electrofishing would be euthanized in a clove oil and water solution and returned to the creek. Approximately 10 fish would be euthanized throughout the length of the surveillance area. Species population data would be documented during electrofishing activities. Sites would be accessed by vehicle and on foot via established roads and trails.

**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/ Lindsey Arotin  
Lindsey Arotin  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel                      February 3, 2022  
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.

**Proposed Action:** Palisades Creek Rainbow Trout and Cutthroat Hybrid Trout Removal

## **Project Site Description**

The South Fork Snake River tributary, Palisades Creek, is located in Bonneville County, Idaho in the Swan Valley. The majority of Palisades Creek runs through Caribou-Targhee National Forest, and portions of the lower 2 miles are located on private property. Bonneville County is surrounded by mountains, forest, and farmland with elevations ranging from 5,000 - 9,000 feet.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA determined the proposed activities would have no potential to cause effects to historic properties on December 20, 2021. The proposed activities would not result in ground disturbance that could potentially impact archaeological resources. No modifications to existing historic built resources are proposed.

Notes: BPA CR Project No.: ID 2022 011

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance would occur as a result of surveying, electrofishing, and fish removal activities. Impact to geology and soils would be temporary and minor causing little to no effect. All sites are accessible by vehicle and have well-defined parking and maintenance areas.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground or intentional vegetation disturbances would be associated with surveillance, electrofishing, or fish removal activities. Clove oil used in the euthanizing solution has potential to adversely impact vegetation. Clove oil would be used in low concentrations and care would be taken to prevent contact with vegetation. Temporary vegetation disturbances could occur as a result of human presence. No known ESA-listed, state-listed, sensitive, or special-status plant species are known to exist at the activity sites.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project activities may cause minor, temporary disturbance to wildlife due to increased noise and vehicle traffic, and human presence. Euthanized fish disposed of in the stream could potentially be consumed by surrounding wildlife. The clove oil used to euthanize fish has a low toxicity, low potential of bioaccumulation, and would be used in low doses. Clove oil would not have a significant adverse impact to surrounding wildlife. No ESA-listed, state-listed, sensitive wildlife species, or designated critical habitat are known to exist in activity locations.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed electrofishing and fish surveillance would have minor and/or temporary effects to water bodies and fish; such as increased turbidity, aquatic habitat disturbances, and increased physiological stress to aquatic life. Only rainbow trout and cutthroat hybrid trout would be handled and euthanized. Clove oil used in the euthanizing solution has a low toxicity; is not persistent in the environment; has low bioaccumulation potential; and poses no significant risk to aquatic environments in low concentrations.. There would be no permanent adverse physical changes to water bodies or floodplains resulting from the proposed actions. Activities with potential to effect aquatic life are part of an effort to restore the YCT, a special-status species within Idaho. There are no Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed fish or other special-status species or associated habitats known to exist within or near the project site.

### Notes:

- o IDFG would adhere to all applicable terms and conditions identified in the following state collection permit: USFS Special Use Permit, Authorization ID: PAL80

## **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing activities are proposed; thus, the action does not have the potential to impact wetlands.

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action does not have the potential to impact groundwater.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not impact or change land use.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Existing visual quality of the area would not be altered.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small increase in emissions would occur from vehicles accessing the project sites. However, this increase would be very minor and short term.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities would generate minor, temporary increases in noise due to vehicle traffic and human presence during project activities.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Workers carrying out surveillance, electrofishing, and fish removal activities are trained in proper techniques. Clove oil used in the fish euthanizing solution has low potential to cause health effects and would be used in small quantities. This activity is not considered hazardous nor does 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: The majority of proposed work would occur in Caribou-Targhee National Forest. Forest Service biologists are aware of the fish removal activities and have assisted in the efforts. Portions of the lower two miles of Palisades Creek is privately-owned property. Private property access would be coordinated with landowners. Field technicians would not dispose of fish near areas frequented by recreationalists or land owners.

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

Signed: /s/ Lindsey Arotin February 3, 2022  
Lindsey Arotin, ECF - 4 Date  
Environmental Protection Specialist