



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 10

1200 Sixth Avenue, Suite 900  
Seattle, WA 98101-3140

OFFICE OF  
WATER AND  
WATERSHEDS

**CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION**

**Continued Coverage of the Chief Joseph Fish Hatchery  
Under the Reissued Washington State General NPDES Permit for Federal Aquaculture Facilities  
and Aquaculture Facilities in Indian Country**

**Summary**

The Chief Joseph Fish Hatchery is a salmon hatchery owned and operated by the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. The hatchery was completed in 2013 and is located below the Chief Joseph Dam on the Columbia River, Washington State. EPA provided NPDES permit coverage to the facility in April 2013 under the 2009 Washington State General NPDES Permit for Federal Aquaculture Facilities and Aquaculture Facilities in Indian Country, WAG130000 (2009 GP). Pursuant to 40 CFR Part 6, as a *new source* facility, coverage of the Chief Joseph Hatchery was considered a federal action subject to NEPA review. EPA issued an Environmental Assessment (EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) in April, 2013, for coverage of the Chief Joseph Hatchery under the 2009 GP.

EPA plans to reissue the Washington State General NPDES Permit for Federal and Aquaculture Facilities and Aquaculture Facilities in Indian County (Washington GP). In addition to first issuance, renewal of an NPDES permit to a *new source* is an action subject to NEPA review. The only *new source* facility to be covered under the reissued Washington GP is the Chief Joseph Fish Hatchery.

Pursuant to 40 CFR § 6.204, certain actions may be “categorically excluded” from further NEPA review if the proposed action fits into a category of actions that do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment, and does not involve any “extraordinary circumstances.” EPA has determined the continued coverage of the Chief Joseph Hatchery under the reissued Washington GP is an action eligible for categorical exclusion from further NEPA review.

**Project Description**

The Chief Joseph Hatchery is aimed at rebuilding salmon populations in areas historically damaged by the Columbia River hydropower system, and to allow for the reintroduction of spring Chinook salmon in the Okanogan River, a tributary of the Columbia River. The hatchery was completed in 2013 and is located just below the Chief Joseph Dam on the southwest border of the Colville Reservation.

**Categorical Exclusion Criteria**

The proposed project involves reissuance of an NPDES permit to a *new source*. The proposed action meets the criteria for categorical exclusion as outlined at 40 CFR §6.204(a)(1)(iv). This category of actions includes, “*Actions involving re-issuance of a NPDES permit for a new source providing the conclusions of the original NEPA document are still valid (including the appropriate mitigation), there will be no degradation of the receiving waters, and the permit conditions do not change or are more*

*environmentally protective.*

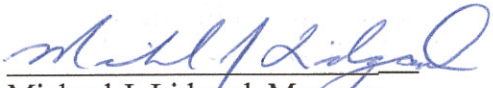
EPA has determined the original NEPA document (the 2013 EA/FONSI) is still valid, there will be no degradation of the receiving waters, and the permit conditions are the same or more protective.

**Extraordinary Circumstances**

In addition to meeting the general requirements for a categorical exclusion, categorically excluded actions must not involve any extraordinary circumstances. A review of the application package and other information provided by the applicant about the proposed action indicates that none of the extraordinary circumstances outlined in 40 CFR § 6.204(b) are involved.

**Finding**

Upon review of the original NEPA document and NEPA regulations pertaining to the granting of a categorical exclusion determination at 40 CFR § 6.204, it is the finding of the undersigned that continued coverage of the Chief Joseph Fish Hatchery under the reissued Washington GP meets the criteria to be categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

  
Michael J. Lidgard, Manager  
NPDES Permits Unit  
EPA Region 10

6/8/16  
Date