Categorical Exclusion Form

Project: Soda Butte Creek Native Fish Restoration Project
PEPC Project Number: 58279
Project Description:

A parkwide Native Fish Conservation Plan was prepared in December 2010. The plan was needed to curtail on-going losses in native fish populations and resultant impacts to the natural food webs they support. Across the park, changing precipitation patterns combined with the lingering effects of historical and illegal stocking of non-native fish continue to result in shifts in ecosystem function. Now, by removing the non-native fish and other non-natural components of the ecosystem, the NPS will strive to restore natural ecosystem components that have been lost or degraded.

Yellowstone NP has been working with partner agencies (Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks; U.S. Forest Service; and Wyoming Game and Fish) to remove brook trout from Soda Butte Creek for the past two decades. Brook trout removal has been done by electrofishing the upper portions of Soda Butte Creek, above Ice Box Canyon and selectively removing brook trout while returning cutthroat trout back to the stream. Removal of brook trout in Soda Butte Creek by electrofishing was our proposed conservation action described in our Native Fish Conservation Plan EA. Electrofishing is both labor intensive and costly. After two decades of removal effort, brook trout continue to expand their range downstream in Soda Butte Creek.

To curtail further expansion of brook trout in Soda Butte Creek, the objective is to remove brook trout by applying a piscicide (rotenone) to remove brook trout from upper portions of the creek above Ice Box Canyon. After treatment, genetically pure Yellowstone cutthroat trout would be stocked into the stream in an effort to secure the population into the future. Yellowstone NP proposes to work with partner agencies including Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks, U.S. Forest Service, and Wyoming Game and Fish to remove brook trout from the upper reaches of Soda Butte Creek. Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks is currently developing an Environmental Assessment through their Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) process.

This project is located in the reaches of Soda Butte Creek and includes all areas of Soda Butte Creek and tributaries above Ice Box Canyon as well as two miles below Ice Box Canyon. An approved piscicide would be used to remove all fish above Ice Box Canyon. Piscicide application would take place during late summer and cover the entire watershed above Ice Box Canyon. Dilute rotenone would be applied via drip stations, backpack sprayers, and a mixture of powdered rotenone and sand. A detox station would be staged upstream of Ice Box Canyon. Potassium permanganate would be used to detoxify the piscicide. Potassium permanganate would temporarily turn the stream a deep purple color.

It is anticipated that up to two miles of stream below Ice Box Canyon would be affected by the treatment. It is anticipated that several years of treatment (2-4 yrs) may be necessary to completely eradicate brook trout from upper Soda Butte Creek.

Approximately 15 staff from Yellowstone NP and an additional 15 staff from our partner agencies would be involved in the application and detoxification of rotenone in upper Soda Butte Creek.

Details regarding rotenone application and detoxification procedures and analysis of impacts are provided in the Native Fish Conservation Plan/EA. While Soda Butte Creek was not specifically mentioned as a piscicide project the actions described above meet the criteria developed for inclusion under the adaptive management framework for this plan. No wetland statement of findings is required as this project would qualify for an excepted action under "actions designed to restore degraded (or completely lost) wetland, stream, riparian, or other aquatic habitats or ecological process. For this exception "restoration" refers to re-establishing environments in which natural ecological processes can, to the extent practicable, function as they did prior to disturbance."

In response to public scoping, and the concern by the public of removing native Yellowstone cutthroat trout that are genetically pure (greater than 99%), Yellowstone National Park and Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks have modified both proposals to include electroshocking of Soda Butte Creek to remove cutthroat trout prior to rotenone treatment(s). The salvaged cutthroat trout will be held within the Soda Butte Creek watershed, in tanks and/or within upper untreated tributaries, and returned to Soda Butte Creek in the areas of Cooke City and Silver Gate following the rotenone treatment(s).

Project Locations:

Location

County:	Park	**State:**	WY
District:		**Section:**	
Geo. Marker:		**Other:**	

Mitigation(s):

- Mitigating the impacts to non-target organisms would also be accomplished by collecting and disposing of as many fish carcasses as possible immediately following treatment to avoid attraction of bears and other animals to the project area.
- The project lead will ensure that all project-related employees, such as contract employees, would be given orientation on how to avoid disturbing or encountering bears and how to minimize unavoidable effects or encounters. Orientation would include information about park regulations regarding food storage, disposal of garbage and other bear attractants, and approaching or harassing wildlife.
- Ensure work crews adhere to bear safety and food storage regulations.
- If any cultural materials are discovered during construction, work in the area shall halt immediately, the National Park Service must be contacted, and the materials evaluated by an archeologist or historian meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards (48 FR 22716, Sept. 1983). Call Tobin Roop (344-2224), Staffan Peterson (344-2290), or Robin Park (344-2155) for assistance.
- Please contact your compliance representative if the scope of work changes to ensure proper compliance documentation has been completed. Upon project completion, please send a written summary, with photos if possible, to close out the administrative record for your project.
- Please adhere to the following mitigation measures as listed in the Native Fish Conservation Plan under section 2.7.4 Use of Piscicides: 1) Mitigating the effects of piscicide on human health and safety would be ensured by strict adherence to all label guidelines and other applicable state, federal, local, and agency regulations pertaining to application, handling, storage, and transportation. 2) Each project that requires piscicide use would be managed by a certified piscicide applicator. 3) Risks from piscicides to the public would be mitigated using public awareness through press releases prior to project initiation and signage (placards) in and around the project area (trailheads, as well as information available at backcountry offices). In some cases the public would be temporarily restricted from entering the project area, particularly treated waters, during and after the treatment. 4) Actions that would take place in backcountry and recommended wilderness areas would adhere to Yellowstone National Park'sMinimum Requirement Policy. Approval of a Minimum Requirement Analysis would be required for each action that requires structures, flight landings, or mechanized equipment in recommended wilderness areas. 5)

Methods to mitigate piscicide use include: lowering piscicide concentration while still achieving complete eradication and adjusting treatment timing to avoid harming juvenile amphibians. 6) Survey work would be completed prior to piscicide application to establish the distribution of target and non-target fish and presence of fishless water so that waters can be left untreated if treatment is not required. 7) Mitigating the impacts to non-target organisms would also be accomplished by minimizing treatment concentration and duration as well as collecting and disposing of as many fish carcasses as possible immediately following treatment to avoid their consumption by bears and other animals.

Describe the category used to exclude action from further NEPA analysis and indicate the number of the category (see Section 3-4 of DO-12):

B.1 Changes or amendments to an approved plan, when such changes would cause no or only minimal environmental impact.

Explanation:

On the basis of the environmental impact information in the statutory compliance file, with which I am familiar, I am categorically excluding the described project from further NEPA analysis. No exceptional circumstances (e.g. all boxes in the ESF are marked "no") or conditions in Section 3-6 apply, and the action is fully described in Section 3-4 of DO-12.

Signature

Superintendent: _____ **Date:** 7/16/2015

Dan Wenk

NPS Contact: _____ **Date:** 7/15/15

ENVIRONMENTAL SCREENING FORM (ESF)

DO-12 APPENDIX 1

Date Form Initiated: 04/21/2015

Updated May 2007 - per 2004 Departmental Manual revisions and proposed Director's Order 12 changes

A. PROJECT INFORMATION

Park Name:	Yellowstone National Park
Project Title:	Soda Butte Creek Native Fish Restoration Project
PEPC Project Number:	58279
PMIS Number:	
Project Type:	Restoration (REST)
Project Location:	
County, State:	Park, Wyoming
Project Leader:	Todd Koel
Administrative Record Location:	YCR Compliance Files
Administrative Record Contact:	Bianca Klein
Notes:	

B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

See Categorical Exclusion Document for full project description.

Target compliance completion date: Late August

Is project a hot topic (controversial or sensitive issues that should be brought to attention of Regional Director)? No

C. RESOURCE EFFECTS TO CONSIDER:

Identify potential effects to the following physical, natural, or cultural resources	No Effect	Negligible Effects	Minor Effects	Exceeds Minor Effects	Data Needed to Determine/Notes
1. Geologic resources – soils, bedrock, streambeds, etc.		Negligible			Negligible, short-term adverse impacts will occur with temporary placement of equipment on stream banks.
2. From geohazards	No				

3. Air quality	No				
4. Soundscapes	No				
5. Water quality or quantity			Minor		Minor, short-term adverse impacts will occur to water quality during piscicide treatment. The treatment is expected to discolor the water a purple color for 3 – 5 days. Additional days may occur if re-treatment is necessary.
6. Streamflow characteristics	No				
7. Marine or estuarine resources	No				
8. Floodplains or wetlands		Negligible			Negligible, short-term adverse impacts will occur to wetlands by staff trampling while working along the river's edge.
9. Land use, including occupancy, income, values, ownership, type of use	No				
10. Rare or unusual vegetation – old growth timber, riparian, alpine	No				
11. Species of special concern (plant or animal; state or federal listed or proposed for listing) or their habitat	No				
12. Unique ecosystems, biosphere reserves, World Heritage Sites	No				
13. Unique or important wildlife or wildlife habitat	No				
14. Unique or important fish or fish habitat			Minor		Minor beneficial impacts will occur to important fish or fish habitat as a result of this project.

15. Introduce or promote non-native species (plant or animal)	No				
16. Recreation resources, including supply, demand, visitation, activities, etc.			Minor		Minor, short-term adverse impacts will occur to fishing activities due to closures of the stream to fishing while treatments are applied.
17. Visitor experience, aesthetic resources			Minor		Minor, short-term adverse impacts will occur to visitor experience due to closures of the stream to fishing while treatments are applied.
18. Archeological resources	No				
19. Prehistoric/historic structure	No				
20. Cultural landscapes	No				
21. Ethnographic resources	No				
22. Museum collections (objects, specimens, and archival and manuscript collections)	No				
23. Socioeconomics, including employment, occupation, income changes, tax base, infrastructure	No				
24. Minority and low income populations, ethnography, size, migration patterns, etc.	No				
25. Energy resources	No				
26. Other agency or tribal land use plans or policies	No				

27. Resource, including energy, conservation potential, sustainability	No				
28. Urban quality, gateway communities, etc.	No				
29. Long-term management of resources or land/resource productivity	No				
30. Other important environment resources (e.g. geothermal, paleontological resources)?	No				

D. MANDATORY CRITERIA

Mandatory Criteria: If implemented, would the proposal:	Yes	No	N/A	Comment or Data Needed to Determine
A. Have significant impacts on public health or safety?		N		
B. Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas?		N		
C. Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources (NEPA section 102(2)(E))?		N		
D. Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks?		N		

E. Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?		N		
F. Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant, but cumulatively significant, environmental effects?		N		
G. Have significant impacts on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, as determined by either the bureau or office?		N		
H. Have significant impacts on species listed or proposed to be listed on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species?		N		
I. Violate a federal law, or a state, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment?		N		
J. Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898)?		N		
K. Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007)?		N		
L. Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112)?		N		

For the purpose of interpreting these procedures within the NPS, any action that has the potential to violate the NPS Organic Act by impairing park resources or values would constitute an action that triggers the DOI exception for actions that threaten to violate a federal law for protection of the environment.

E. OTHER INFORMATION

1. Are personnel preparing this form familiar with the site? Yes

1.A. Did personnel conduct a site visit? No

2. **Is the project in an approved plan such as a General Management Plan or an Implementation Plan with an accompanying NEPA document?** Yes

2.A. **If so, plan name:** Native Fish Conservation Plan
Plan Project ID: 30504

2.B. **Is the project still consistent with the approved plan?** Yes

2.C. **Is the environmental document accurate and up-to-date?**
FONSI: Yes ROD: No **Date approved:** 05/18/2011

3. Are there any interested or affected agencies or parties? Yes

3.A. **Did you make a diligent effort to contact them?** Yes

4. **Has consultation with all affected agencies or tribes been completed?** N/A

5. **Are there any connected, cumulative, or similar actions as part of the proposed action?** ***(e.g., other development projects in area or identified in GMP, adequate/available utilities to accomplish project)*** No

F. INSTRUCTIONS FOR DETERMINING APPROPRIATE NEPA PATHWAY

First, always check DO-12, section 3.2, "Process to Follow" in determining whether the action is categorically excluded from additional NEPA analyses. Other sections within DO-12, including sections 2.9 and 2.10; 3.5; 4.5(G)(4) and (G)(5), and 5.4(F), should also be consulted in determining the appropriate NEPA pathway. Complete the following tasks: conduct a site visit or ensure that staff is familiar with the site's specifics; consult with affected agencies, and/or tribes; and interested public and complete this environmental screening form.

If your action is described in DO-12 section 3.3, "CEs for Which No Formal Documentation is Necessary," follow the instructions indicated in that section.

If your action is not described in DO-12, section 3.3, and IS described is section 3.4, AND you checked YES or identified "data needed to determine" impacts in any block in section D (Mandatory Criteria), this is an indication that there is potential for significant impacts to the human environment, therefore, you must prepare an EA or EIS or supply missing information to determine context, duration, and intensity of impacts.

If your action is described in section 3.4 and NO is checked for all boxes in section D (Mandatory Criteria), AND there are either no effects or all of the potential effects identified in section C (Resource Effects to Consider) are no more than minor intensity, usually there is no potential for significant impacts and an EA or EIS is not required. If, however, during internal scoping and further investigation, resource effects still remain unknown, or are at the minor to moderate level of intensity, and the potential for significant impacts may be likely, an EA or EIS is required.

In all cases, data collected to determine the appropriate NEPA pathway must be included in the administrative record.

G. INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM SIGNATORIES

All interdisciplinary team members sign as directed or deemed necessary by the Superintendent. By signing this form, you affirm the following: you have either completed a site visit or are familiar with the specifics of the site; you have consulted with affected agencies and tribes; and you, to the best of your knowledge, have answered the questions posed in the checklist correctly.

H. SUPERVISORY SIGNATORY