

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Underwood Tap Structure Relocation

**Project Manager:** Deborah Staats

**Location:** Underwood, Skamania County, WA

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B4.13 Upgrading and rebuilding existing powerlines

**Description of the Proposed Action:** BPA proposes to replace in-kind a wood-pole transmission line structure just outside Skamania PUD's Underwood Substation in Skamania County, Washington to accommodate the Skamania PUD's needed upgrade at the facility. The structure is pole 26/27 of the Underwood Tap to Bonneville PH1-Alcoa No. 1&2 transmission line. The replacement pole would support a sharper angle into the Underwood Substation where Skamania PUD would perform rebuild work under their planned outage to support load growth in the area.

The new wood pole would be similar in appearance to the existing pole, would be located about 7 feet to the northeast of the current one, and would be shorter than the current pole. A small section of new conductor and ground-wire would be spliced to the existing wires to allow for the increased span into the substation. A new guy anchor would be installed at pole 26/26 (to the northwest of the pole) to provide additional support to pole 26/27. A rocked landing (approximately 15'X35') would be installed to the south of the planned pole. All changes and additions would be on BPA and PUD substation tracts, and BPA transmission line right-of-way tracts.

**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, July 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/ Michael O'Connell

Michael O'Connell

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy Mason

Stacy L. Mason

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: December 1, 2015

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:** Underwood Tap Structure Relocation

---

### Project Site Description

The project components in the Underwood Tap and the associated Underwood Tap to Bonneville PH1-Alcoa No 1&2 115-kV transmission line corridor are in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA). The BPA fee-owned tap property is at Newell and Love Rd., and the transmission line originates at the north side of the tap. All properties are in Skamania County, WA, amidst agricultural lands and forest.

### Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. <b>Historic and Cultural Resources</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Explanation: A pedestrian survey was performed on November 12, 2015, and archeological records review on November 16, 2015, both finding no historical resources in the project area. A cultural resource report was developed and provided to the Washington SHPO at the Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and the Yakama Nation tribe on December 1, 2015.

Mitigation:

- ✓ Potential discoveries of archeological materials shall be treated with the 'inadvertent discovery' guidelines: Stop work, contact BPA KEC lead and BPA KEC archeologist for further notifications, and: ensure integrity of site and materials until further instructions.

2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-----------------------------	-------------------------------------	--------------------------

Explanation: The project area is in a previously disturbed right-of-way within a transmission line corridor and substation grounds. The ground disturbance expected is that typically associated with removing a single wood pole transmission line support structure (0.005 acre) and installation of the replacement (0.005 acre), and that expected for a plate guy-anchor install (unknown, but expected to be equal to or less than that for the poles). Surface topsoil and geological resources would be retained through use of one or more Best Management Practices (BMP's) for erosion control like silt fencing or straw bales. Exposure of bare mineral soil to the elements is likely to be of limited duration.

Mitigation:

- ✓ The disturbed area would be seeded with a standard mix used by BPA Transmission Line Maintenance crews on similar projects.

3. **Plants** (including federal/state special-status species)

Explanation: There are no special-status species and no designated habitat present in the project area. The diffuse stickseed is a Washington state-listed threatened species that had been observed within 0.4 mile of the project in 1978. There is very little potential for the plant to occur in the planned disturbance footprint.

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

Explanation: There are no special-status species and no designated habitat present in the project area. The western gray squirrel is a Washington state-listed threatened species. There is a site at 0.65 mile from the project that had active nests in 1997. Because of the limited nature of the disturbance planned within the non-forested BPA right-of way, there is no potential to impact the western gray squirrel's preferred habitat of wooded land with connected tree crowns. The work is too limited in time and space to impact the Canada lynx or gray wolf, the two federally-listed threatened species in the broad vicinity.

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

Explanation: There are two small freshwater ponds within 0.4 mile of the project area, and the White Salmon River is 0.89 mile from the site. There is a Middle Columbia River Steelhead Critical habitat unnamed stream at 0.4 mile from the project as well. The ground disturbance would be minimal, and because the pole to be replaced and moved is a single wood pole that is moving seven feet in total, the time and extent of exposure of the disturbed soil would be minimal. No in-water work is planned, and BMPs would be utilized for the small project's disturbance footprint. There would be no impacts to water bodies, floodplains, and fish.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: The freshwater ponds at 0.4 mile from the project would not be impacted by the ground-disturbing work and any potential runoff of compromised quality would be minimized with the BMPs.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: Disturbance would be physical in nature with no potential contaminants other than vehicular fluids that could possibly leak on site. The project is small in scope and any potential leaks from working vehicles would be attenuated by spill kits with which they are equipped.

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

Explanation: Situated in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA), the project site would be located in a 'large-scale agriculture' land use designation. The project would involve the operation and maintenance of existing transmission facilities, and is within the range of activities covered under the Savings provisions of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act of 1986.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: There would be imperceptible changes to the visual presentation of the project area if completed. The addition of a guy wire on one wood pole structure, the shift of seven feet and replacement in-kind of the pole being removed, and the rocking of a landing area in the cleared right-of-way, are typical disturbances expected with maintenance work. The visual impact would be short-lived and would blend in quickly with the surrounding configurations.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: This is maintenance-level work and should be completed in a short period of time with a small crew and limited machinery emitting exhaust fumes. Dust would not be an issue at this time of year. There would be no impact to air quality.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: There would be temporary, intermittent noise from construction activities during daylight hours. Operation noise would be in compliance with BPA's audible noise policy.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: There would be no impact to human health and safety from the proposed project.

### **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, if necessary:

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

---

**Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Description: Skamania PUD is the initiating entity for the project and operates the tap. BPA is in close coordination with the PUD as the BPA work would be fundamental for the PUD work (for which they have an outage planned).

---

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

Signed: /s/ Michael O'Connell  
Michael O'Connell, KEC-4

Date: December 1, 2015