

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Malin-Hilltop Access Road Maintenance

**Project No.:** 332207

**Project Manager:** Clint Stanton, Access Road Engineer – TFLF-TPP-3

**Location:** Lane County, OR

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** Routine maintenance

**Description of the Proposed Action:** BPA proposes to perform routine road maintenance, repair and improvements along approximately 3.5 miles of road that accesses BPA's Malin-Hilltop transmission line and the Malin Repeater Site. The proposed work is necessary for access and roadway safety. No in-water work will be conducted. The proposed project includes the following features:

- Existing access road improvements, including construction of water bars, drain dips, an placement of spot rock (18,345 lineal feet)
- Access road reconstruction (883 lineal feet)
- Roadside clearing (9,138 lineal feet)
- Roadside ditch construction (4,216 lineal feet)

**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/ John Wiley*

John Wiley

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

*/s/ Stacy L. Mason*

Stacy L. Mason

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: April 20, 2017

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:** Malin-Hilltop Access Road Maintenance

---

### Project Site Description

The project is located in rural Klamath County, OR and Modoc County, CA. Land use within the project vicinity includes the BPA right-of-way clearing, rocky vegetated hillslopes, and irrigated fields. Land ownership in the vicinity includes the BPA right of way, BLM-owned lands and privately held property. The approximate site elevation range is approximately 4,100-5,600' above sea level.

- City, County, State: Klamath County, OR and Modoc County, CA
- Legal Description: OR: T41S 13E Sec 17 to Sec21; CA: T48N 5E Sec 14 to T48N 6E Sec 29
- Latitude/Longitude: West 41.996 N -121.36 W; Top 42.017 N -121.309 W; Bottom 41.969 N -121.306 W
- Watershed Name: Mills Creek/Lost River - 1801020409 (HUC10)
- Waterbody Name(s): None
- Land Use: Private, BPA right-of-way, BLM-owned lands

### 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: All sections being proposed for improvement have been previously surveyed. No additional cultural or historic resource investigations are required. In the event that archaeological or historical materials are discovered during project activities, work in the immediate vicinity must stop, the area would be secured, and the SHPO and the environmental project lead must be notified. Work would not commence again until the SHPO has cleared the area.

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

Explanation: The project will involve ground-disturbing activities for roadway reconstruction, however, all proposed ground disturbing activities are proposed within the existing road prism. No impervious surface is proposed. No prime or unique farmlands would be affected. Therefore, the proposed action would have limited impacts to geology and soils.

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



Explanation: A site evaluation was conducted by Otak biologists on August 10-11, 2016. Plants occurring within the existing roadway right-of-way where construction is proposed include a mosaic of native chaparral species, dominated by juniper (*Juniperus* spp.), rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus* spp.) and big sage (*Artemisia tridentata*), and includes a variety of native and non-native forbs. Approximately 9,138 lineal feet of roadside clearing is proposed and roadside vegetation within these areas is expected to be removed as a result of the project. The roadway reconstruction is proposed on an area where the existing access road right-of-way is poorly defined and seldom traveled, and vegetation has grown over the dirt roadway. The proposed roadside clearing will remove vegetation that has grown over the existing roadways. No special-status plant species or their habitats were documented to occur within the vicinity or were observed during the field survey due to lack of suitable habitat. Therefore, the proposed action would have no effect on special-status plant species and limited impacts to other native and non-native vegetation.

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



Explanation: A site evaluation was conducted by an Otak biologist on August 10-11, 2016, to evaluate site conditions and the surrounding environment. An official federally-listed species list was re-requested from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Information, Planning and Conservation database (IPaC) on APRIL 11, 2017. Three federally listed wildlife species under jurisdiction of the USFWS were indicated as having the potential to occur within a 2-mile radius of the project area, including the gray wolf, North American wolverine, and the yellow-billed cuckoo. The gray wolf may occur as a transient within the project area, however, given the close proximity of human activity they are unlikely to reside in the area. Field surveys indicated that no suitable habitat for additional special-status wildlife species was found to occur within the project area. The proposed project actions would occur within the existing road prism; therefore, any impacts to non-listed wildlife species would be temporary during construction. Therefore, the project would have no impact to special-status wildlife species.

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



Explanation: The existing road crosses several erosional rills or draws that likely have some ephemeral surface flows during the winter and heavy precipitation events, however, no defined stream channels are present. Work is not proposed within these ephemeral features. No special-status fish species under jurisdiction of the NMFS or other special-status aquatic species are present within these features. No in-water work or work that could result in impacts to any waterways is proposed. The work as proposed is exempt from Corps Section 404 and DSL permit applications. Therefore, the project would have no effect to waterbodies, floodplains, or fish.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: No wetlands are present in the project area. Therefore, the proposed action would have no impacts to wetlands.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: Groundwater and aquifers will not be impacted by the proposed project as the project does not include any groundwater withdraws or changes to aquifer recharge areas. There would be no

impacts to groundwater or aquifers.

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



Explanation: No change in land use is proposed as part of the project. The project does occur within BLM-owned lands; however, no specially designated areas were identified within the project limits. There would be no impacts to land use or specially designated areas

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: There are no residences within visual range of the proposed work. The proposed project feature is visually consistent with existing road embankment and the surrounding environment. There would be no impacts to visual resources.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Dust and equipment emissions generated during construction activities are expected to be minimal and temporary in nature. The project will not result in an increase in vehicle emissions as the unpaved road and crossing currently exist, and no service or road expansion is proposed.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Noise generated from construction is expected to be localized and temporary in nature. The current level of road use is minimal and is not expected to change, and no operational noise increases are expected.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: Project activities would not impact human health or safety.

### **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**

Land ownership within the project limits is privately held. BPA purchased an access road easement from the land owner in 1969 that includes maintenance and road repair activities. The Access Road Engineer would contact adjacent and potentially affected landowners prior to project construction.

---

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

Signed: /s/ John Wiley  
John Wiley EP -4  
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: April 20, 2017