

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Grand Coulee-Okanogan No. 2 transmission line and access road land rights acquisition

**Project No.:** TER ID 12-0164

**Project Manager:** Miroslava Rivera – TERR-3

**Location:** Grant, Douglas, and Okanogan counties, Washington

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B1.24 Property Transfers

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to acquire land rights for the existing Grand Coulee-Okanogan No. 2 transmission line and access roads. BPA's existing rights expired on January 11, 2015

The transmission line is a 115-kV wood-pole line about 45 miles long and runs from Grand Coulee Substation northwest to Okanogan Substation. BPA uses various roads to access the transmission line for operation and maintenance activities. The line and access roads cross tribal, federal, and private lands. The majority of the line, approximately 23 miles, crosses the Colville Indian Reservation. Federal lands include BPA (at the substations) and the Bureau of Land Management.

Under the current Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) Title 25, Part 169, Right-Of-Way Over Indian Land, Subpart C and D, the acquisition process on tribal land requires BPA to perform CFED (Certified Federal) surveys. In order to conduct the CFED surveys, BPA would locate survey monuments for the cadastral survey in addition to doing centerline, edge of right-of-way, and access road surveys. New survey monuments may be installed in the ground as needed.

**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/ Nancy A. Wittpenn  
Nancy A Wittpenn  
Environmental Protection Specialist

/s/ Stacy Mason  
Stacy L. Mason  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: September 5, 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:** Grand Coulee-Okanogan No. 2 transmission line and access road land rights acquisition

### Project Site Description

The transmission line and access roads cross high desert east of the Cascades in northern Washington. The terrain ranges from steep bluffs and hills, to flat wide open areas (Goose Flats and Saddle Horse Flat). The area is mostly dry scrub-shrub range land and open space, with some agricultural land (alfalfa and other grains). Although dry, the area is dotted with many small lakes and marshy areas due to the abundance of springs in the area.

### 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"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> BPA has determined the undertaking (surveys to locate monuments) does not have the potential to cause effects on historic properties. Survey crews are instructed to avoid any standing stone features, and to not create such features as a means to keep a survey marker erect. A BPA archaeologist would conduct a desktop review of any new proposed monument locations to confirm they do not fall within a cultural resource site. No impacts to cultural resources are expected.</p>		
2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Surveying activities would not cause ground disturbance. Any new survey monuments placed would disturb the top layer of soil but these impacts would be localized and negligible.</p>		
3. <b>Plants</b> (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Vegetation is limited in this high desert east of the Cascades. While survey crews would travel along existing access roads, they may trample vegetation while locating existing monuments. No vegetation would be cut, trimmed, or killed. Any impact to plants would be negligible and temporary.</p>		
4. <b>Wildlife</b> (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Survey crews would travel along existing access roads where wildlife exists. Crew presence in any one spot would be brief and temporary. No wildlife habitat would be permanently disturbed. Temporary impacts from crew presence would be negligible.</p>		

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



Explanation: Any new survey monuments would not be placed in surface water so no impacts to water or fish would occur. Monuments may need to be placed in floodplains but they are so small as to have no impact to floodplain capacity.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: Although there are lakes and marshy areas along the right-of-way, there does not appear to be any delineated wetlands. Survey vehicles would stay on existing roads. Survey crew presence in any wet areas would be temporary with negligible impacts.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: Any new survey monuments placed in the ground would not be deep enough to disturb groundwater or aquifers. No impacts to groundwater or aquifers would occur.

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



Explanation: Surveys and reacquiring land rights on the existing Grand Coulee – Okanogan transmission line and access roads would not alter existing land uses. BPA does hold a conservation easement that crosses portions of the existing right-of-way and access roads. Survey and reacquiring easements would not change the existing conservation easement. Survey crews would follow all existing conservation easement requirements and no impacts to land use would occur.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: Little or no ground disturbance would occur during survey. No construction or impacts to the visual environment would occur.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Little or no ground disturbance would occur during survey. Vehicle emissions from survey trucks would be negligible and temporary.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Localized and temporary light noise would occur from survey vehicles passing on access roads and from the survey crews in the field.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: Survey crews would follow all safety protocols while in the field. No toxic materials would be used or disposed of in the field. No impacts to Human Health and Safety would occur.

### **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:

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### **Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Description: Landowners have been contacted by Realty as part of the acquisition process. CFED surveys are required by the Bureau of Indian Affairs for easement acquisition and Realty is in the process of obtaining permission to enter properties..

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

Signed: /s/ Nancy A. Wittpenn  
Nancy A Wittpenn ECT-4

Date: September 5, 2017