

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Santiam-Chemawa Line Rating Upgrade Project

PP&A No.: 2,878

Project Manager: Amanda Williams – TEP-TPP-1

Location: Marion County, OR

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

B1.3 Routine Maintenance

Description of the Proposed Action:

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) owns and operates the Santiam-Chemawa #1 high voltage 230 kV transmission line, which runs from BPA's Santiam Substation in Marion County, Oregon, to BPA's Chemawa Substation, also in Marion County, Oregon. The transmission line requires an upgrade to the line rating to meet Federal and national standards. The line is required to be upgraded in 2018.

To upgrade the line, BPA needs to acquire access road easements to 3 structures, add rock to 3 small sections of existing access roads through agricultural lands, buy back orchard rights in two locations (including vegetation mitigation), and increase the height of 4 transmission towers.

No ground-disturbing work would be required at the four steel-lattice tower locations. Currently, access roads and landings are present at structures 19/3, 19/4, 21/4, and 22/2, but require acquisition and/or temporary access rights for BPA to enter and perform maintenance. Existing access roads and landings will have surface maintenance performed and be utilized to access the previously listed structures. Work would be conducted using standard utility bucket trucks, pickup trucks, and line maintenance personnel, including climbing and grounding gear. A material staging yard will be needed for this project, but has not been located yet. The eventual material staging yard will be approximately 3-5 acres, on flat ground that will be already graveled or paved. It will be located within a 5-mile radius of the project and will undergo an environmental land audit by BPA to determine any outstanding issues that may require additional environmental review, including mitigation and/or consultation, prior to approval.

BPA would coordinate the project activities with all applicable land owners/managers. No part of this project is on or adjacent to any Federal, State, or government-managed lands.

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/ Philip Smith for
Benjamin J. Tilley
Natural Resource Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel
Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: October 18, 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.

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Project Site Description

The project is located in agricultural lands (tree farms) in Marion County, Oregon. This ecoregion is characterized by Woodburn silt and loam soils. Agricultural land use is predominant throughout the entire area as it approaches the urban interface (Salem, Oregon). Transmission towers 19/3, 19/4, 21/4, and 22/2 are located within existing agricultural tree farms that comprise the 125 ft. wide transmission right-of-way. Vegetation includes perennial and annual agricultural crops (X-mas trees, filberts, grass seed), as well as Scots broom and Himalayan blackberry.

Township		Range		Section	County	Site Characteristics
7	S	2	W	10	Marion Co., OR	Agricultural tree farm
6	S	2	W	22, 33	Marion Co., OR	Agricultural tree farm, filbert orchard

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

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

Explanation:

A BPA Archaeologist was consulted on the project. It was determined that due to the limited scope of the project, which does not include any ground-disturbing work or significant alterations to the transmission line or surrounding areas, there would be no changes in the character or use of historic or cultural resources. If the eventual material yard requires ground disturbance to prepare the site, Section 106 consultation will be implemented.

2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Explanation:

The project involves minor surface improvements to existing roads and flat areas surrounding tower sites. There is no potential for significant impacts to geology and soils.

3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Explanation:

There are no special-status or federally-listed plant species present. Work is to be conducted in an existing transmission line right-of-way (ROW) using existing access roads and landings.

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

Explanation:

There are no special-status or federally-listed wildlife species present. Work is to be conducted in an existing transmission line right-of-way (ROW) using existing access roads and landings.

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

No project location is within ¼ mile of any waterbody or floodplain. There is no potential for significant impacts to water bodies, floodplains, and fish.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation:

There are no wetlands present in the project area.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation:

The work would not involve new groundwater wells or ground disturbance that would impact aquifers.

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

Explanation:

Two locations will require permanent filbert tree removal, up to approximately 100 trees. An additional two locations will have orchard height rights modified. There is no potential for significant impacts to specially designated areas.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation:

The proposed work would not impact visual quality. All work would be conducted on existing high voltage transmission infrastructure.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation:

The project would create temporary dust and vehicle emissions due to construction; however, no significant impacts would occur.

11. **Noise**

Explanation:

The project would create temporary noise due to construction; however, no significant impacts would occur.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation:

During project activity, all standard safety protocols would be followed. A safety plan would be developed and followed. By implementing the proposed project, BPA would better preserve public safety removing tall orchard trees.

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: NA

- 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: NA

- 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: NA

- 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: NA

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: The proposed project is located on agricultural lands in Marion County, Oregon, east of the city of Salem, Oregon. Several landowners have been negotiated with to alter land rights. BPA would continue ongoing coordination with the landowners and land management agencies during project activities.

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

Signed: /s/ Philip Smith for
Benjamin J. Tilley
Natural Resource Specialist

Date: October 18, 2017