

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Wine Country-Midway No. 1 Transmission Line Insulator Replacement Project

PP&A No.: 4391

Project Manager: Mark Korsness, TEP-TPP-1

Location: Yakima and Benton counties, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance, B3.2 Aviation Activities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to replace insulators, remedy impairments, improve access roads, and install fall protection along the approximately 26-mile-long Wine Country-Midway No. 1 230 kV transmission line within BPA's Tri-Cities District.

Insulators, strings of bell shaped ceramic discs, would be replaced along the Wine Country-Midway No. 1 transmission line. Using a line truck with helicopter support, if preferable, linemen would access transmission towers and change out insulators.

BPA is also proposing to remedy multiple impairments on the transmission line. An impairment is an area where the distance from the conductor to the ground surface is inadequate, per National Electrical Safety Code (NESC) standards, resulting in a threat to line reliability and posing a risk to public health and safety. At four locations, structures would be relocated which would include excavation and installations of new tower footings. At eleven locations, excavation of the existing ground surface would be required and would consist of approximately 2.8 acres of surface area and approximately 4500 cubic yards of soil in total. Excavated soil would be hauled off or where suitable, distributed within the Right-of-Way (ROW), where it would be stabilized and seeded. At thirteen locations, new wood pole H-frame prop structures would be installed to raise the conductor further away from the ground.

In order to provide a safe work environment, BPA is proposing to construct or repair approximately three miles of access roads. Proposed road work would include: blading, shaping, grading, brushing, and placing surface rock on new and existing road prisms. In addition to the proposed road improvements, work would include the installation of twenty-three leveled and rocked landing areas, consisting of approximately 1.3 acres of disturbance. General equipment used for this type of landing work includes: graders, rollers, bull-dozers, brush hogs, excavators, and dump trucks.

In addition, BPA would install a cable safety system on the vertical climbing path of each transmission tower. The cable system would be connected to the tower with a series of brackets approximately every 10 feet and a top and bottom anchor. Once installed, workers would use the system when climbing the tower by attaching their harness to a specialized pulley which allows

them to glide along the safety cable as they climb. Installation would require a line truck and two-to-three workers in the tower and one-to-two workers on the ground.

A material storage facility for use on the project has been identified along the east side of the Midway Substation. The yard, graveled and fenced, has been used for material storage on previous BPA construction projects. Any additional storage or work areas, including helicopter landing zones, would be environmentally reviewed prior to use on the project.

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, Jul. 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/ Laura Roberts

Laura Roberts

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey. C Grange

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer

April 13, 2021

date

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: Wine Country-Midway No. 1 Transmission Line Insulator Replacement Project

Project Site Description

The proposed project area is located in an existing transmission line ROW in central Washington and consists of shrub steppe, rangeland, and agricultural land with minimal surface water and no fish bearing streams. Project location and land ownership listed below.

Township	Range	Section	County	Ownership
9N	23E	4	Yakima	Private
10N	23E	1, 11-14, 22, 23, 27, 33, 34	Yakima	Private
11N	23E	24, 25, 36	Yakima	Private, Washington Department of Natural Resources
11N	24E	6, 7, 18, 19	Benton	Private, Bureau of Land Management
12N	24E	4, 9, 16, 17, 20, 29, 31, 32	Benton	Private, Dept. of State Lands
13N	24E	14, 22, 23, 27, 33, 34	Benton	Private, Dept. of Energy (Hanford Reach National Monument-McGee Ranch/Riverlands Unit)

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation (CTUIR), Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho (Nez Perce Tribe), the Tribes and Bands of Yakama Nation (YN), and the Wanapum Tribe, the US Bureau of Land Management, US Department of Energy-Hanford, Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), on August 24, 2018. DAHP provided concurrence with the Area of Potential Effect (APE) via a letter dated August 27, 2018, and the YN provided concurrence with the APE on September 4, 2018. BPA sent a no adverse effect to historic properties determination on March 9, 2021 and DAHP concurred on March 9, 2021. The Nez Perce Tribe responded on April 6, 2021. No additional response was received within 30 days.

Notes:

- Flagging would be used at sites 45BN1282, 45BN1286, 45BN2120, and 45YA1844 to restrict vehicle access to avoid sites. A cultural resources monitor would be present during all work on Hanford, and for all work around two other tower structures along the Wine-Country-Midway No. 1 transmission line.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: Soils would be disturbed primarily for new access road, landings, and impairment fixes, prior to being rockered or restored with vegetation.

Note: The following minimization measures would be implemented to minimize impacts to soils.

- During construction all appropriate Best Management Practices (BMP) would be used to implement site specific erosion and sediment control. All disturbed areas would be stabilized and seeded.
- A fugitive dust control plan and a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) would be implemented for the duration of the project.

3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: Vegetation would be disturbed for new access roads, landings, and impairment fixes, with minimal disturbance to vegetation anticipated where existing roads would be repaired or improved.

A portion of the project occurs within the Department of Energy managed Hanford Reach National Monument-McGee Ranch/Riverlands Unit (Hanford Unit). No ground disturbing activities are anticipated on the Hanford Unit. BPA discussed the proposed project with Hanford representatives in November 2020. The project would minimize impacts to sensitive species and habitats discussed in the Hanford Site Biological Management Plan (BRMP) by driving on existing access roads, reducing construction footprint to the least necessary to safely do the work, and using non-ground-disturbing work methods. No additional project requirements under the BRMP were deemed necessary. BPA would continue to communicate and coordinate with Hanford representatives during the implementation of the project.

A Federally listed Threatened species, Umtanum Desert Parsley, occurs in the general vicinity of the project area (within the Hanford Unit) with the closest known observation of the species located adjacent to the main line access road. No ground disturbance is required in this area and no critical habitat would be disturbed. In addition, the area of access road closest in proximity to the species would be fenced and signage added to ensure that no vehicles travel off the existing access road prism. With the above measures, there would be no effect to ESA-listed species.

A state sensitive species, Pipers daisy, does occur in the vicinity of the project (within the Hanford Unit). Project impacts would be minimized by driving on existing access roads, reducing construction footprint to the least necessary to safely do the work, and using non-ground-disturbing work methods.

In other portions of the project area where ground disturbance is anticipated, those areas would be stabilized and seeded with a geographic and climate-appropriate seed mix approved by the landowner.

Notes: The following minimization measures would be implemented to minimize vegetation impacts.

- Drive on existing access roads
- Reduce work area footprint to the least necessary to safely do the work
- Use non-ground-disturbing work methods in designated areas
- Stabilize and seed with a geographic and climate-appropriate seed mix approved by the landowner
- Utilize erosion and sediment control materials composed of certified weed free materials

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: The project would have minimal impact to wildlife and habitat related to temporary disturbance associated with ground disturbance, elevated noise, and human presence. The project would have no effect to ESA-listed species. No impacts to state special-status species or habitats nor other BLM or Hanford sensitive wildlife species are anticipated.

Notes: The following minimization measures would be implemented to minimize impacts to wildlife and their habitat.

- Drive on existing access roads
- Reduce work area footprint to the least necessary to safely do the work
- Stabilize and seed with a geographic and climate-appropriate seed mix approved by the landowner.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: The proposed project area is not near any fish-bearing waterbodies. BMPs would be implemented to ensure that no erosion or spills reached surface water.

Notes: The following minimization measures would be implemented.

- Erosion control measures would be implemented to prevent sedimentation from reaching any nearby waterbody.
- Appropriately stocked spill response kits would be located on vehicles, other equipment, and storage yards used on this project.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing activities would occur in wetlands. Erosion control measures would be implemented to prevent sedimentation.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to ground water or aquifers are anticipated as the ground disturbance would not be deep enough to penetrate groundwater.

Note: The following minimization measures would be implemented to minimize groundwater contamination potential.

- Appropriately stocked spill response kits would be located on vehicles, other equipment, and storage areas.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change in land use or specially-designated areas as a result of the project. The project would be consistent with underlying federal land management plans.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would have a minor impact to visual quality due primarily to the new roads and landings, and impairment fixes, as these would be new components to the transmission line ROW. These changes would be visually consistent with the existing transmission line corridor.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: A small amount of vehicle emissions and dust may occur temporarily during construction.

Note: The following minimization measures would be implemented to minimize dust potential

- A fugitive dust control plan would be implemented for the duration of the project.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours. No ongoing noise increase is expected for this area as a result of this project.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to human health and safety are anticipated to result from this 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: N/A

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

Explanation: N/A

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: N/A

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: N/A

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: BPA realty, environmental, and cultural resource specialist have coordinated the proposed project activities with the Washington Department of Natural Resources, Bureau of Land Management, Department of Energy (Hanford Reach National Monument-McGee Ranch/Riverlands Unit), and private landowners.

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

Signed: /s/ Laura Roberts April 13, 2021
Laura Roberts, ECT-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist