

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Chemawa – Salem No. 1 & 2 Span 10/4 Fence and Gate Installation Project

PP&A No.: 4,616

Project Manager: Ryan Martin, TELF – TPP-3

Location: Polk County, OR

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance; B4.6 Additions and Modifications to Transmission Facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration owns and operates the Chemawa – Salem No. 1 & 2 high voltage transmission line which runs from Chemawa Substation in Marion County, Oregon, to Salem Substation in Polk County, OR, through the greater Salem area metropolis in the central Willamette Valley. In line mile 10 of the transmission line as it trends south toward Salem Substation, the transmission line easement, which runs through a suburban residential neighborhood, is unsecured. The grass and dirt area beneath the high voltage transmission line is being utilized as an unauthorized parking area and off-road access point, which is disturbing the soils, leading to mud track-out onto the residential streets, and generating complaints from neighbors and the City of Salem environmental compliance inspectors. BPA proposes to secure the right-of-way (ROW) in this area and obstruct vehicular access by installing approximately 80 feet of chain link fencing and posts on the south side of the roadway, spanning the transmission ROW, and blocking access. A gate would be installed with a BPA lock to facilitate BPA inspections and maintenance actions. Disturbed soils would be seeded with a native erosion control seed mix, and mulched with weed free straw. Equipment would likely include an auger truck and light duty trucks.

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/ Aaron Siemers

Aaron Siemers
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Date: April 26, 2021

Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

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: Chemawa – Salem No. 1 & 2 Span 10/4 Fence and Gate Installation Project

Project Site Description

The project is located in the Willamette Valley of west central Oregon, in the city of Salem, approximately one mile north of the Willamette River. The area is within the Valley Foothills ecoregion of the Willamette Valley, characterized by rolling foothills and low mountains, interspersed with streams and rivers that drain to the Willamette River. The western portion of the valley, where the project is located, is generally drier, and historically the home of oak and madrone woodlands, wetlands, and native grassland prairies. Today the area is marked by suburban and rural residential developments, pastures, timberland, and orchards.

At the project site, Chemawa – Salem No. 1 & 2 structure 10/4 is located approximately 100 ft. north of Gehler Rd. NW in Salem. The transmission line is double circuit, and supported by steel monopoles. The transmission ROW, 100 ft. wide, crosses Gehler Rd. NW at a right angle. The transmission easement is characterized by rolling hills and grasses, with monopoles approximately every 600 to 1500 ft., and a dirt track BPA access road. Vegetation under the transmission line is managed to promote low-growing plant species to promote safety and reliability clearance standards between the ground and the energized conductor. The ROW in the project area is surrounded by single family residential development and multi-family apartment units common to the west side of Salem.

The legal description for the work area is listed below:

Township		Range		Section	County	Ownership
7	S	3	W	20	Polk, OR	Public (U.S.A.)

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA identified an area of potential effect (APE), conducted background research into recorded cultural resources and archaeological surveys near the APE, and conducted a pedestrian survey of the APE. On March 24th, 2021, BPA initiated consultation with the Oregon Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. On March 24th, BPA simultaneously made a determination that no historic properties would be affected by the proposed actions. None of the consulted parties commented during the statutory 30 day comment period, therefore no further consultation is required.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event of inadvertent discovery of cultural resources during project activities, all work would cease, the area would be secured, and BPA archaeological staff and the consulting parties would be notified.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA's fence and gate installation project would have minor impacts to the local geology and soils. Fence post holes would be dug approximately 4 ft. deep and 1 ft. in diameter which would displace some soils. Approximately 10 – 15 fence posts would be necessary to install the fence.

By securing the ROW easement, BPA intends to stabilize and revegetate the disturbed soils in the area which has been impacted by off-road vehicular activity. The planned project would mitigate ongoing erosion and ground disturbance from unauthorized use.

Notes:

- Upon construction completion, BPA would stabilize the construction area with standard erosion and sediment control BMPs, such as seed and straw, or seed and hydro-mulch.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA's urgent construction action would have some limited impacts to the remaining undisturbed vegetation in the project area. For instance, some light regrading may be necessary to install the fence posts, gate, and fence. Once the fence is installed and the area is secured, vegetation in the ROW would likely proliferate with less disturbance by unauthorized use.

BPA obtained an official species list for U.S. Fish and Wildlife on April 13, 2021. Bradshaw's lomatium, Kincaid's lupine, Nelson's checker-mallow, water howellia, and Willamette daisy are listed as threatened or endangered in Polk County. BPA conducted an effects determination, and as the project area does not provide suitable habitat, the project would have no effect on these species.

Notes:

- Disturbed soils would be seeded with a native seed mix and mulched upon project completion.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction on the project would likely disturb wildlife in the area due to the presence of humans and additional noise. However, disturbance would be temporary, and the area is already subject to significant human development and disturbance.

BPA obtained a species list for the project area from the US Dept. of Fish and Wildlife on April 13, 2021. An effects determination was conducted for marbled murrelet, northern spotted owl, streaked horned lark, yellow-billed cuckoo, and Fender's blue butterfly. BPA conducted an effects determination, and due to the lack of habitat for the ESA-listed species in the project area, the project would have no effect on these species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No natural waterway conveyances are present in the project area. Project activities would potentially have positive water-quality impacts, since the work would reduce erosion in the transmission easement, and also mitigate the mud track-out onto the nearby paved roadway which would improve the water quality of stormwater run-off on the road surface.

Notes:

- During construction and stabilization actions, utilize erosion and sediment control BMPs to mitigate potential stormwater run-off impacts

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present in the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Excavation for fence post and gate installation would not occur at depths that would intercept groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is not located in a specially-designated area. Existing land use is transmission line easement, with unauthorized parking and off-road vehicular activity. Project activities would restore appropriate land use.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The existing visual profile, which consists of a cleared transmission easement, would be maintained for the most part, however, the addition of a fence and gate would alter the appearance of the work area to some extent. By securing access to the transmission easement, the area would likely transform from a muddy, disturbed area, to a stabilized vegetated area.

Notes:

- Disturbed soils would be seeded and mulched upon project completion.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some dust may be generated due to construction traffic and general construction activities. The project would have minor, temporary impacts to air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some noise may be generated due to construction traffic and general construction activities. However, any noise generated would be temporary.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project would restrict unauthorized activity in a high voltage transmission corridor, including off-street parking in an undesignated area. Securing the transmission ROW could potentially have human health and safety benefits.

Notes:

- Construction crews would develop a Safety Plan, implement best safety practices, follow established safety guidelines, and identify all job hazards prior to work beginning each day.

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 would continue to coordinate all proposed construction actions with the stakeholders in the project area, including adjacent landowners and the City of Salem.

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

Signed: /s/ Aaron Siemers Date: April 26, 2021
Aaron Siemers, EPR-4
Environmental Protection Specialist