

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Covington-White River Insulator Replacement

**Project Manager:** Chad Caldwell TPCV-OLYMPIA

**Location:** Auburn, WA

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** 4.6 Additions or modifications to transmission facilities.

**Description of the Proposed Action:** BPA proposes to replace insulators on towers 6/2 and 6/3 of the Covington-White River Nos. 1 and 2 double-circuit 230kV lines. To safely install the insulators, BPA proposes to install fall protection devices on both towers. To access the towers, BPA proposes to mow a small area of blackberry bushes at each tower that are currently preventing access to the base of the tower.

**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/ Douglas Corkran

Douglas Corkran  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: May 17, 2018

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: Replace insulators on towers 6/1 and 6/2 of the Covington-White River Nos. 1 and 2 double-circuit 230kV line, install fall protection, and clear blackberries.**

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## Project Site Description

The site is located in Western Washington, east of the City of Auburn. Tower 6/1 is located in a grassy equipment storage yard on the Auburn Adventist Academy grounds. Tower 6/2 is located on a bluff overlooking the White River, and is surrounded by mid-seral coniferous forest. Good access roads provide ingress and egress to each tower.

## 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> No ground-disturbing work would take place. Existing access roads would be used to access the sites. Mowing of some small areas of blackberries would occur, but would not result in ground disturbance. No impacts to cultural resources are expected from construction. Cultural resource staff has indicated that due to the nature of the project which consists of no ground disturbance of any kind, and existing and maintained access roads will be used to approach the transmission line, this project has no potential to impact historic properties and no consultation with the Tribe is necessary for this project. BPA staff has reached out to the Muckleshoot Tribe to inform them of this project.</p>		
2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> No ground-disturbing work would take place. Existing access roads would be used to access the sites. Mowing of some small areas of blackberries would occur, but would not result in ground disturbance. No impacts to geology and soils are expected from construction.</p>		
3. <b>Plants</b> (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> No sensitive plant species are found in the project area. No ground-disturbing work would take place. Existing access roads would be used to access the sites. Mowing of some small areas of blackberries would occur, but would not result in ground disturbance. No impacts to plants (except weed species) are expected from construction.</p>		
4. <b>Wildlife</b> (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> No sensitive wildlife species are found in the project area. Construction may startle or scare some common species away from the project area, but would not permanently affect wildlife species. No impacts to sensitive wildlife species are expected from construction.</p>		

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



Explanation: The project area is located in an upland area well away from any water bodies or floodplains. No impacts to water bodies, floodplain, or fish are expected from construction.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: The project would use existing access roads and landings. No wetlands have been identified near either structure. If any wetlands are on site, impacts would be temporary and would not involve any fill or removal. No impacts to wetlands are expected from construction.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: No ground-disturbing work would take place, and no releases of hazardous chemicals are expected that could affect groundwater and aquifers. No impacts to groundwater and aquifers are expected from construction.

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



Explanation: No changes to land uses are proposed. The transmission line would continue to operate as it has in the past with no changes in land use. No specially designated areas have been identified in or around the project area.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The insulators to be replaced would be of the same type and material as the existing ones. The fall protection devices are small and not noticeable when installed on the towers. The removal of blackberry bushes may cause some temporary visual changes, but would not affect the overall look and feel of the project, or change viewsheds.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Work would take place on existing improved access roads. Travelling to and from the site, and mowing could release some temporary fugitive dust, but overall the project would have no long-term or regional impact on air quality.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: The construction equipment would create some temporary noise during the time it is being used in the project area. This noise would be temporary, local, and similar to other noise-producing activities in the vicinity; therefore, no impacts from noise to nearby residents, animals, or other users are expected.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: The project would improve human health and safety by making the transmission system more reliable, and less subject to failure. Appropriate measures would be taken to prevent bystanders from entering the work site during construction. No adverse impacts to human health and safety are expected.

### **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: BPA will notify underlying landowners prior to conducting the work. Cultural resource staff has indicated that due to the nature of the project which consists of no ground disturbance of any kind, and existing and maintained access roads will be used to approach the transmission line, this project has no potential to impact historic properties and no consultation with the Tribe is necessary for this project. BPA staff has reached out to the Muckleshoot Tribe to inform them of this project.

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

Signed: /s/ Douglas Corkran  
Douglas Corkran, ECT-4

Date: May 17, 2018