

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 replace four lattice-steel transmission towers with taller towers.

Work will include removal of the existing transmission towers, including underground footings. Footings will be removed by excavating approximately 3 feet below ground level, disturbing a 75-foot by 75-foot area at each tower. New footings and towers that range between 10 feet and 25 feet taller than the existing towers will be installed.

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 (e.g., grading, gravel) performed and be utilized to access the previously listed structures. Work would be conducted using large utility bucket/boom trucks, excavation equipment (dump trucks, bulldozers, backhoes, excavators), pickup trucks, chainsaws, 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 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/ Benjamin Tilley
Benjamin J. Tilley
Natural Resource Specialist

Concur:

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

Date: *August 10, 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.

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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 comprises 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

Explanation: On December 8, 2017, BPA initiated consultation with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde (CTGR), the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians of Oregon, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). On January 2 and January 8, 2018, the Oregon SHPO concurred with the current APE for cultural resources and the built environment (SHPO Case No. 17-1976). On December 28, 2017, the CTGR concurred with the current APE.

On March 12, 2018, a Determination of Eligibility letter with a determination of no historic properties affected to the consulting parties. On April 10, 2018, the Oregon SHPO concurred that a good faith effort has been implemented and the project will likely have no effect on any significant archaeological objects. On April 16, 2018, the CTGR had no comments or additional information to offer at this time.

No further comments were received as a result of BPA's consultation efforts. The report has been assigned SHPO Report# 29686 and added to the SHPO Library.

In the unlikely event an archaeological object or site (i.e., historic or prehistoric) is encountered during project implementation, all ground disturbance at the location should cease immediately until a professional archaeologist can be contacted to evaluate the discovery.

2. Geology and Soils

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. Soil disturbance from the footing removals will require excavation of at least three feet below the ground surface to remove existing footing.

3. **Plants** (including federal/state special-status species)



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. Two locations will require permanent modification of orchard use-- up to 100 filbert trees will require removal. An additional two locations will have orchard height rights modified.

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)



Explanation: 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 modification of orchard use-- up to 100 filbert trees will require removal. 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 will modify visual quality with orchard tree removal and placement of taller transmission towers, but visual changes would be consistent with existing transmission line corridor and no high quality views would be affected.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: The project would create temporary dust and vehicle emission 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 will continue ongoing coordination with the landowners 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/ Benjamin Tilley
Benjamin J. Tilley
Natural Resource Specialist

Date: August 10, 2018