

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Jones Canyon – Santiam No. 1 Road & Trail Improvements Miles 133-135

PP&A No.: 4,148

Project Manager: Ryan Martin – TELF-TPP-3

Location: Marion County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B 1.3 Routine Maintenance

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to improve approximately 2.5 miles of existing roads and trails providing access to the Jones Canyon-Santiam No. 1 transmission line in Marion County, Oregon. BPA transmission line maintenance crews access the transmission line right-of-way for periodic inspections and repairs through a series of roads and trails. Near Detroit Lake, in line miles 133, 134 and 135, access roads and trails are in need of maintenance. BPA plans to improve approximately 2.5 miles of existing roads and trails and install drainage features. Road and trail improvements would include the following activities:

- grubbing to remove ground vegetation;
- reconstruction of degraded road and trail footprint;
- regrading and blading;
- addition of surface rock;
- installation of water bars and drain dips;
- construction of landings;
- installation of stairs and gates; and
- construction of one approximately 20-foot-long foot bridge over an unnamed creek.

While in some areas regrading would be necessary to improve the road and trail, the existing road or trail footprint would not be expanded, and no large trees would need to be removed for the project. Disturbed soils would be stabilized and seeded upon project completion. Construction equipment would likely include dump trucks, back-hoe, front end loaders, mini-excavators, all-terrain-vehicles, and powered wheel barrows.

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 C. Siemers
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange
Katey Grange
NEPA Compliance Office

Date: July 24, 2019

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 would be located in the Cascade Mountains of central Oregon, near the northern banks of the Santiam River and Detroit Lake, in the Western Cascades Lowlands and Valleys ecoregion. The ecoregion is characterized by mild, wet winters and thick forests of western hemlock and Douglas fir, as well as relatively high-gradient streams and rivers that in some locations support endangered species act (ESA)-listed salmon and bull trout.

The access road and trail footprint runs primarily through the cleared Jones Canyon – Santiam No. 1 transmission right-of-way (ROW), but also loops northeast out of the ROW into forested areas of Douglas fir, hemlock, vine maple, and big leaf maple, with understory of sword fern and salmon berry. The trail crosses one relatively small, unnamed stream that drains the southwest facing slopes of the mountainside.

In the project area, the transmission line ROW runs generally parallel and adjacent to Oregon state Highway 22. The transmission line was built on the southern facing mountain slopes of the Santiam River valley. The transmission line is approximately 150 to 500 linear feet northeast of the roadway, but approximately 300 to 400 feet higher in elevation. The Santiam River, which is dammed at this location by the Big Cliff Dam, runs immediately adjacent to Highway 22. The cleared transmission ROW supports native shrubs and other vegetation such as sword fern, lady fern, and foxglove, as well as invasive species such as Himalayan blackberry, oxeye daisy, and Scotch broom. The gradient of the project area is rather steep, with slopes up to approximately 50-75% in some locations.

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"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> BPA engaged in consultation with the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians, the Oregon Dept. of Forestry, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. On June 20, 2019, BPA sent a determination letter stating that the undertaking would have no adverse effect to historic properties. No consulted parties responded during the 30-day comment period. BPA and the trail construction contractor would implement an inadvertent discovery plan in the event historic and cultural resources are discovered during the course of construction activity.		
2. Geology and Soils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Explanation:

The majority of the planned construction would occur on pre-existing, established road and trail footprint. However, the project would require road and trail regrading in some locations where the footprint has degraded. Any rock cuts would be stabilized on site in a manner to reduce the risk of rock slide. Disturbed soils would be stabilized with straw or other acceptable erosion and sediment control methods, and seeded with a native seed mix.

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



Explanation:

Regrading the roads and trails with heavy machinery would likely disturb adjacent vegetation, including native grasses, ferns, and forbs, as well as invasive plants. These areas would be reseeded with native grasses post construction.

BPA obtained a species list for the project site from the US Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) on 6/26/19. An effects determination was conducted for Kincaid's lupine, Bradshaw's desert parsley, Nelson's Checkermallow, and Willamette daisy. BPA determined that the project would have no effect on special status plants and habitat. Please review the project's Effects Determination Memo for more information.

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



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 due to the nearby location of Highway 22, some background ambient noise is common in the project area.

BPA obtained a species list for the project site from the US Fish and Wildlife (USFWS) on 6/26/19. An effects determination was conducted for Fisher and Northern spotted owl. BPA determined that the project would have no effect on special status wildlife and habitat. Please review the project's Effects Determination Memo for more information.

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



Explanation:

The project area is not located in or near a floodplain.

No in-water work is planned in or near ESA-listed fish streams. The Santiam River is approximately 150 to 500 linear feet south of the work areas, but the work area is separated by approximately 300 to-400 feet of elevation and State Highway 22. BPA has determined that the project would have no effect on ESA-listed fish and designated critical habitat.

For the foot bridge, no in-water work would be required as footings would be installed outside the ordinary high water mark. Disturbed soils near the stream would be stabilized with appropriate erosion and sediment control methods and revegetated.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation:

No wetlands are present in or near the project area.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation:

The project would require excavation that would extend approximately 1 to 3 feet below ground surface, which would not intersect ground water.

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



Explanation:

Land use in the area consists of transportation, timber harvest and forestry, recreation, and transmission easement. There are no specially designated areas nearby. Land use would not change or be affected by project activities.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation:

No large trees would be removed during construction. Trail and access road improvements would generally not be visible from any known viewpoints or State Highway 22 due to the tree cover and the steep terrain. The project would be consistent with the existing visual quality of the area.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation:

Some dust may be generated due to construction traffic, transport and placement of rock, and general construction activities. A fugitive dust plan would be implemented to control dust generation, if needed. With an appropriate dust control mitigation plan, the project would have minor, temporary impacts to air quality.

11. **Noise**



Explanation:

Some temporary noise may be generated due to construction traffic, transport and placement of rock, and general construction activities. However, the project is in a relatively remote area, away from known recreational sites and concentrated human activity.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation:

Due to the cuts and fills associated with the trail construction and the steep terrain, rock fall is a recognized risk to human health and safety on the project, both to the general public, and to the construction contractor. To mitigate risk, BPA would

- Ensure that the trail construction contractor has extensive experience building trails, stabilizing rocks and soils, and minimizing the risk of rock fall.
- Ensure that the site-specific-safety plan (SSSP) developed by the contractor would address the risk of rock fall and detail risk mitigation efforts and contingencies. The SSSP would also address other fall and trip hazards associated with working in this difficult terrain.

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: Not applicable.

- 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: Not applicable.

- 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: Not applicable.

- 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: Not applicable.

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: BPA has notified landowners of the planned work, including Oregon Dept. of Forestry, and solicited comments on the project and mitigation measures. BPA would continue to coordinate with the landowners during preconstruction planning and the construction phase of the project.

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
Aaron C. Siemers, EPR-4
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: July 24, 2019