

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Transmission Line Marker Ball Replacement Phase 4: Groups A & D

Project Manager: Dianne Bonner - TEPL-TPP-1

Location: Washington State

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance; B1.9 Airway Safety Markings and Painting; B3.2 Aviation activities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to replace marker balls on 17 transmission lines in Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Klickitat, Lincoln, Walla Walla, Whitman, and Yakima Counties, Washington. As part of BPA's wildfire mitigation effort, BPA noted that plastic and fiberglass marker balls can fail at their attachment point on conductor or ground wire, potentially igniting and falling to the ground to start wildfires. BPA would like to mitigate wildfire risk by completing replacements of the marker balls identified for Phase 4 before the 2023 wildfire season. Phase 4 construction is currently planned for March to July 2023.

BPA proposes to replace marker balls on Ashe-Hanford No. 1, Ashe-Marion No. 2, Ashe-Slatt No. 1, Grand Coulee-Bell No. 6, Grand Coulee-Chief Joseph No. 3, Grand Coulee-Hanford No. 1, Grand Coulee-Schultz No. 1, Grand Coulee-Schultz No. 2, Ice Harbor-Franklin No. 1, Ice Harbor-Franklin No. 2, Little Goose-Lower Granite No. 1, Central Ferry-Lower Granite No. 2, Lower Monumental-Little Goose No. 1, Schultz-Wautoma No. 1, Sickler-Schultz No. 1, Olympia-Grand Coulee No. 1, and Wautoma-Knight No. 1 utilizing Human External Cargo (HEC), or a crew suspended from a helicopter. Helicopter landing zones are necessary for helicopters to land and take off, as well as for staging crew and equipment. Access road improvements are not anticipated at this time. Large flatbed trucks or similar vehicles would be used to haul materials and equipment but use of loaders, excavators, or other heavy equipment is not anticipated. Additionally, OHGW replacement is required on Central Ferry-Lower Granite No.2 and Little Goose-Lower Granite No.1.

BPA may utilize either helicopters or drones to examine marker balls prior to replacement and to inspect marker balls following replacement for proper installation.

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/ Anthony Gibson

Anthony Gibson

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel Date: March 17, 2023

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: Transmission Line Marker Ball Replacement Phase 4: Groups A & D

Project Site Description

The project is located throughout central and southeastern Washington. The project area is spotty and traverses mostly scrub and agricultural land and spans several river crossings. Work would occur on privately-owned lands in addition to lands managed by the Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of Defense, Department of Energy-Richland Operations Office (DOE-RL) and US Fish and Wildlife. See Table 1 below for Township, Range, Section Number, and County information.

Table 1. Township, Range, Section Number, and County Information

Line Corridor	Span(s)	Township, Range, Section	WA Counties
Ashe-Hanford No. 1	8/1-8/2	T12N, R27E, SEC4	Pasco
	11/2-11/3	T13N, R27E, SEC30 T13N, R27E, SEC19	Pasco
	12/1-12/2	T13N, R27E, SEC19	Pasco
Ashe-Marion No. 2	1/1-1/2	T12N, R28E, SEC32	Benton
	16/2-16/3	T10N, R26E, SEC35 T9N, R26E, SEC2	Benton
Ashe-Marion No. 2, Ashe-Slatt No. 1	8/3-8/4	T11N, R27E, SEC33	Benton
	32/2-32/3	T7N, R26E, SEC20 T7N, R26E, SEC19	Benton
Grand Coulee-Bell No. 6	1/1-1/2	T29N, R30E, SEC34 T28N, R30E, SEC3	Douglas
	1/2-1/3	T28N, R30E, SEC3	Douglas
	1/4-1/5	T28N, R30E, SEC3	Douglas
	33/1-33/2	T26N, R35E, SEC18	Lincoln
Grand Coulee-Chief Joseph No. 3	1/1-1/2	T29N, R30E, SEC34	Douglas
Grand Coulee-Hanford No. 1	1/1-1/2	T29N, R30E, SEC34 T28N, R30E, SEC3	Douglas / Grant
	1/2-1/3	T28N, R30E, SEC3	Grant
	1/4-1/5	T28N, R30E, SEC3	Grant
	4/1-4/2	T28N, R30E, SEC23	Grant
	66/2-66/3	T19N, R26E, SEC27	Grant

	66/3-66/4	T19N, R26E, SEC27 T19N, R26E, SEC34	Grant
	85/1-85/2	T16N, R26E, SEC28 T16N, R26E, SEC33	Grant
Grand Coulee-Schultz No. 1 Grand Coulee-Schultz No. 2	1/1-1/2	T29N, R30E, SEC34	Douglas
	1/2-1/3	T29N, R30E, SEC34 T28N, R30E, SEC3	Douglas / Grant
	1/4-2/1	T28N, R30E, SEC3	Grant
	31/3-31/4	T25N, R27E, SEC25	Douglas
	70/1-70/2	T21N, R22E, SEC13 T21N, R22E, SEC24	Douglas
	72/4-72/5	T21N, R22E, SEC22 T21N, R22E, SEC21	Douglas
	72/5-73/1	T21N, R22E, SEC21	Douglas
	73/2-73/3	T21N, R22E, SEC21	Douglas
	7/3/3-74/1	T21N, R22E, SEC 20	Douglas / Grant
	74/1-74/2	T21N, R22E, SEC 20 T21N, R22E, SEC 29	Chelan
	96/1-96/2	T19N, R19E, SEC21	Kittitas
Ice Harbor-Franklin No. 1 Ice Harbor-Franklin No. 2	8/1-8/2	T9N, R30E, SEC23	Franklin
Little Goose-Lower Granite No. 1	1/3-1/4	T13N, R38E, SEC28	Whitman / Columbia
	7/5-8/1	T13N, R39E, SEC28	Columbia
	8/4-9/1	T13N, R39E, SEC28 T13N, R39E, SEC27	Columbia
	15/4-16/1	T13N, R40E, SEC15	Garfield
Central Ferry-Lower Granite No. 2	3/3-3/4	T13N, R40E, SEC15	Garfield
	6/2-6/3	T13N, R40E, SEC12 T13N, R41E, SEC7	Garfield
	10/3-10/4	T13N, R41E, SEC11	Garfield
	14/3-14/4	T13N, R42E, SEC8 T13N, R42E, SEC4	Garfield
	17/1-17/2	T14N, R42E, SEC35	Garfield
Lower Monumental-Little Goose No. 1	1/5-2/1	T12N, R34E, SEC2	Walla Walla
Olympia-Grand Coulee No. 1	156/1-156/2	T21N, R22E, SEC21	Douglas
Schultz-Wautoma No. 1	54/2-55/1	T13N, R24E, SEC11 T13N, R24E, SEC14	Benton
Sickler-Schultz No. 1	14/3-14/4	T22N, R21E, SEC26	Douglas / Chelan
Wautoma-Knight No. 1	1/2-1/3	T12N, R24E, SEC20	Benton
	7/2-7/3	T11N, R23E, SEC3 T11N, R23E, SEC4	Yakima

	33/3-33/4	T9N, R19E, SEC13	Yakima
	55/4-56/1	T6N, R17E, SEC12	Klickitat

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Following a review of the potential project impacts to cultural resources, BPA has determined that this undertaking would result in No Historic Properties Affected or No Adverse Effect to Historic Properties.

The BPA Historian review has shown that marker ball replacement is considered normal, in-kind repair work and would not adversely affect the National Register eligibility of any transmission lines.

BPA initiated consultation with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) - Spokane District, Confederated Colville Tribes (CCT), Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho, Wanapum Tribe, Yakama Nation, Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), Washington Department of Transportation, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, and U.S. Department of Energy-Richland Operations Office (DOE-RL) on October 7, 2022. Washington DAHP provided concurrence with the Area of Potential Effects (APE) for Group A via a letter dated October 11, 2022, and Group D on October 12, 2022. BLM concurred with the APE in an email dated October 10, 2022. BPA sent a no historic properties affected determination on February 2, 2023, for Group A and February 10, 2023, for Group D. Washington DAHP concurred in a letter dated February 3, 2023, for Group A and February 13, 2023, for Group D. BLM concurred with this finding in letters dated February 13, 2023. No additional response was received within 30 days.

Under Federal law, BPA has the responsibility to protect cultural resources that are inadvertently discovered on federally-owned land or during federally-funded projects. Should cultural resources be encountered during project implementation, all activity would be immediately discontinued and BPA cultural resource staff would be contacted. BPA's cultural resources staff would work with tribes and the California SHPO to address the inadvertent discovery as quickly as possible.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance is anticipated for this project.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minimal disturbance to vegetation is anticipated. Vegetation may be crushed in those locations where equipment would be accessing marker balls. There would be no effect to ESA-listed plant species. No impacts to state or other sensitive species are anticipated.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In general, the project would have minimal impacts to wildlife and habitat related to temporary disturbance associated with elevated noise and human presence. The project would have no impacts to state-listed and other sensitive species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no ground-disturbing activities in any river, stream, or other waterbody along the project and no riparian vegetation would be impacted. The project would have no effect to ESA-listed fish species.

Notes: Appropriately stocked spill response kits would be located on vehicles and landing zones used on this project.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no ground-disturbing activities in wetlands along the project.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to groundwater or aquifers are anticipated due to the lack of ground disturbance.

Notes: Appropriately stocked spill response kits would be located on vehicles, other equipment, and fly yards used on this project.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use would occur and project activities would not impact existing land uses, and there would not be any recreational or operational disruptions.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have a minimal impact to visual quality. Replacement marker balls would be similar to the existing marker balls and consistent with other marker balls along the transmission line.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

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

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some temporary construction noise from construction activities and helicopter use would occur during daylight hours. The operational noise of the transmission line would not change.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to human health and safety are anticipated.

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 and environmental staff have coordinated the proposed project activities with the Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Land Management, Confederated Colville Tribes, Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation, WA Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), Department of Energy-Richland Operations Office (DOE-RL), Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho, Wanapum Tribe, Washington Department of Transportation, Yakama Nation, US Fish and Wildlife Service, 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/ Anthony Gibson Date: March 17, 2023

Anthony Gibson – EPI-4
Physical Scientist (Environmental)