

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** FY20 Oregon Redmond District Priority Poles - P03957

**PP&A No.:** 4982

**Project Manager:** Meadow Nelson – TELP-TPP-1

**Location:** Deschutes and Klamath counties, Oregon

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B1.3 Routine Maintenance

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to replace in-kind replacement of wood pole structures and associated structural/electrical components (e.g., cross arms, insulators, guy anchors, etc.) along selected BPA transmission lines in the Redmond TLM District. The proposed project would allow safe and timely access to the transmission lines which would reduce outage times and maintain reliable power in the region.

Approximately 70 poles would be replaced. Replacement poles would be placed approximately five feet ahead or back on line from the existing structure, following removal of current pole structures. Maintenance along existing access road prisms and landings would be performed where necessary to facilitate safe access. Access road maintenance includes blading, shaping, rocking, and construction of water bars and drain dips. Approximately 90 waterbars, seven drain dips, and four gates would be installed. Around 107,000 linear feet of access road maintenance would occur and around 125 landings would be constructed. An 11.75 acre material yard located in Deschutes County would be used to stage materials and would require grading, rocking, and fencing. These lines include: Redmond-Pilot Butte PACW No 1, LaPine-Chiloquin No 1, and Pilot Butte-LaPine No 1 transmission line.

**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/ Zoe Wellschlager*

Zoe Wellschlager

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

*/s/ Sarah T. Biegel*

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer      Date: February 5, 2024

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:** FY20 Oregon Redmond District Priority Poles - P03957

### Project Site Description

The project is located in Central Oregon in the eastern Cascades slopes and foothills ecoregion. It is characterized by grasslands, sagebrush, and ponderosa pine-dominated forests. The majority of the project area lies in the Deschutes National Forest and the Fremont-Winema National Forest managed by the United States Forest Service (USFS). Smaller sections of the line go through private timberland and land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The corridor ranges from 80 ft. to 160 ft. wide in the project area. Soils are generally silty, sandy, and rocky, with patchy vegetation cover. Vegetation within the right-of-way (ROW) is periodically managed to remove tall-growing vegetation and promote low-growing species. Adjacent to the ROW are pines, juniper, and other tree species within forested sections of the project area. Native shrubs such as sagebrush, rabbitbrush, and various grasses dominate the dryer sections of the project area. Several intermittent waterways and small wetlands are present near or in the project area.

Transmission Line/ROW	Structure/Roadwork	Township	Range	Section	Ownership
Redmond-Pilot Butte PACW No 1	3/6	ORT15S	R13E	SEC29	private
	14/1, 14/2	ORT17S	R12E	SEC24	private
	access road work included				
LaPine-Chiloquin No 1	40/6	ORT28S	R8E	SEC6	Private
	40/4, 37/7, 36/3	ORT27S	R8E	31, 19, 7	Private, USFS
	33/7, 34/3, 32/3, 32/5, 32/6, 31/5, 31/6, 31/7, 27/8	ORT26S	R8E	32, 29, 21, 37	USFS
	24/3	ORT25S	R9E	0	USFS
	13/6, 10/3	ORT24S	R10E	16, 2	State Land, BLM
	10/2, 7/6, 6/2, 5/1, 4/2, 4/3	ORT23S	R10E	36, 24, 12, 1, 6	Private, BLM
	3/2, 3/3, 2/2, 2/7, 3/1, 1/3, 2/1	ORT22S	R11E	31, 30, 19	USFS, BLM
	access road work included				
Pilot Butte-LaPine No 1	3/6	ORT18S	R12E	SEC13	Private
	10/7, 10/8, 11/1, 12/7, 12/8, 13/1	ORT19S	R12E	16, 29	USFS
	30/3	ORT22S	R11E	SEC18	USFS

	26/2, 26/3, 23/1, 23/3, 23/6, 23/7, 23/8, 27/7	ORT21S	R11E	19, 9, 4	USFS
	18/6, 17/4, 16/2, 14/9, 15/2	ORT20S	R11E	23, 13, 12, 6	USFS
	14/3, 14/4, 14/6	ORT19S	R12E	SEC31	USFS
	3/4	ORT18S	R12E	SEC12	Private
	access road work included				

## Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

### 1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, the Burns Paiute Tribe, the Klamath Tribe, US Bureau of Land Management (Prineville District), US Forest Service (Deschutes National Forest, Fremont-Winema National Forest), Oregon Department of State Lands, and the State Historic Preservation Office on October 27, 2022. Oregon SHPO responded on November 9, 2022, assigning the project SHPO Case No. 22-1562, and from the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon on November 1, 2022, concurring with the Area of Potential Effect (APE). No other responses were received by BPA.

BPA sent a Determination of Effect letter to the consulting parties on December 22, 2023, with a determination that the project would have no adverse effect to historic properties. USFS-Deschutes National Forest concurred with the determination on January 2, 2024, BLM concurred on January 9, 2024, USFS-Fremont-Winema National Forest concurred on January 22, 2024, and Oregon SHPO concurred on January 19, 2024.

In the event any archaeological material is encountered during project activities, work would be stopped and the BPA environmental lead, archaeologist, and project manager would be immediately notified. Reasonable measures would be taken to protect the discovery site, including any appropriate stabilization or covering.

A cultural resources monitor would be present during all ground-disturbing activities around sites 35DS1670 (LaPine-Chiloquin 1/3 and related access road from 0/1 to 1/5), 35KL881 (LaPine-Chiloquin 28/1 and associated access road), and LPCH 3-1 (LaPine-Chiloquin 3/1 and associated access road). In these areas, access road construction would be limited to the existing road prism, and vehicles would stay on the road. Sections of access roads near sites 207CRD89, 246CRD89, and 320CRD85 along the access road to LaPine-Chiloquin 22/1, and around site PBLP-2-IF (Pilot Butte-LaPine 26/2 and associated access road) would be fenced/flagged off during access road construction to limit disturbances and make sure vehicles stay on the road.

### 2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All wood pole replacements would be in-kind and be placed in the same location as the existing poles. Localized soil disturbance would occur during wood pole replacements, landing improvements, and access road maintenance activities. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized as necessary.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal special-status plants are present. *Astragalus peckii* (Peck's milkvetch), a State-listed species is located near part of the APE. However, project activities would be limited to the already impacted (ROW) and would not substantially alter existing plant communities. No concerns about sensitive plant species were expressed by public land managers.

#### **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 limited to the already impacted ROW and would not substantially alter the long-term footprint or operational noise of the line; therefore, wildlife and associated habitat would only be briefly disturbed by construction activities. No concerns about sensitive wildlife species were expressed by public land managers.

- Should any proposed or listed endangered, threatened, or sensitive species be found during project activities within, adjacent, or near enough that activities could be a disturbance, USFWS and USFS Wildlife Biologist would be notified immediately, and activities would be halted until their effects can be determined and their significance assessed.
- If an active raptor nest is discovered during implementation, a Forest Service wildlife biologist would be consulted to determine necessary protection measures and a Land Resource Monitoring Plan with timing restrictions would be followed.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No in-water work is planned in or near ESA-listed fish streams. All stormwater would be infiltrated on-site and work would take place during the dry season. The work location is in arid eastern Oregon. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized to ensure sediment and other contaminants do not enter bodies of water; therefore, water bodies, floodplains, and fish would not be affected by the proposed project activities.

#### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No in-water work is planned in or near ESA-listed fish streams. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized to ensure sediment and other contaminants do not enter bodies of water; therefore, wetlands would not be affected by the proposed project activities.

#### **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities are not expected to impact groundwater or aquifers. The maximum depth of disturbance would be about 12 feet below ground surface.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Land use in the area consists of transportation, timber harvest and forestry, recreation, and transmission easement. The project would not result in permanent changes or impacts

to land use. The material yard for pole storage would be developed to manage treated wood poles. Appropriate BMPs would be utilized to contain the treated wood poles.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be performed within existing transmission line ROWs. Replacement of wood poles and associated components would be in kind and in the same location. The project would be consistent with the existing visual quality of the area.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Exhaust and dust from utility and construction equipment may temporarily reduce air quality in the immediate project area. 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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise of the transmission line would not change. The project area is also relatively remote and located away from recreational sites and concentrated human activity.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA personnel would develop a site-specific health and safety plan to address any hazards during the proposed work. The proposed work is necessary to ensure ongoing safe and reliable operation of the transmission line and to maintain power delivery in the region.

### **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 would notify and coordinate with the landowners/managers in advance of the construction of the proposed project. The BPA realty specialist has been in contact with multiple BLM offices and the USFS was given advance notice 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/ Zoe Wellschlager  
Zoe Wellschlager  
Scientist (Environmental)

Date: February 5, 2024