

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Walking Trail Construction on Ross-Lexington No. 1 Right-of-Way

Project No.: LURR-20200314

Project Manager: Charlene Belt, TERR-TPP-2

Location: Clark County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow The Holt Group, Inc. to construct a public walking trail on BPA's fee-owned Ross-Lexington No. 1 transmission line right-of-way (ROW) from approximately structure 7/4 to structure 8/2 near Vancouver, Clark County, Washington. The trail would parallel the transmission line following a north-south route in the eastern portion of the ROW, which is undeveloped and is not occupied by any overhead transmission lines. The trail would be associated with a planned residential development that will abut the ROW to the east.

The approximately 4-foot wide and 1,500-foot-long walking trail would follow a meandering route to avoid existing trees and topography to the greatest extent possible, thereby minimizing the need for extensive vegetation removal and grading. However, some vegetation removal and minor grading would still be required. Brush and low-growing vegetation obstructing the trail route and hazard trees (i.e., trees that are dead or dying and leaning over the trail route) would be cleared with a brush hog, chainsaws, and/or small logging equipment, depending on the size and density of the vegetation. Woody debris would be scattered onsite. The trail route would then be graded to the competent subgrade and surfaced with either wood chips or compacted gravel. Grading and surfacing would be completed with a small dozer, compactor, and/or equivalent construction equipment. Additional features (e.g., pet waste bags and disposal bins, benches, etc.) may be installed intermittently along the walking trail. Minor ongoing maintenance of the walking trail may be performed, including resurfacing the trail with the same (or similar) material, repairing segments of the trail within the original trail prism, and manually clearing obstructive brush and low-growing vegetation by hand pulling, grubbing, or cutting with hand tools (e.g., pruning shears, machetes, chainsaws, and similar equipment).

Maintenance activities that would not be permitted would include rerouting the trail, constructing new or additional trail segments, resurfacing the trail with different material (e.g., impervious surfacing), using herbicides to manage obstructive brush and low-growing vegetation, and removing additional trees. All construction equipment movement would remain within the proposed trail route to the greatest extent practicable to minimize impacts to surrounding areas.

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/ Walker Stinnette

Walker Stinnette

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

2/7/2024

Date

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: Walking Trail Construction on Ross-Lexington No. 1 Right-of-Way

Project Site Description

The project site is located on BPA fee-owned transmission line ROW from approximately structure 7/4 to structure 8/2 near Vancouver, Clark County, Washington (Township 03 North, Range 01 East, Section 12). The proposed walking trail would parallel the transmission line following a north-south route in the eastern portion of the ROW, which is undeveloped and consists of secondary growth forest. The forest overstory is primarily cottonwood and Douglas-fir trees (12-18 inch diameter at breast height), and the understory contains dense stands of blackberry, western swordfern, and salal interspersed with other common bunchgrasses and forbs. The Gee soil series is mapped within the project site, which is not hydric. No waters or wetlands are present within the project site. Surrounding land uses consist of low-density residential properties and isolated stands of secondary growth forest.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On December 14, 2020, BPA initiated National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 consultation with the following parties:

Cowlitz Indian Tribe

Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP)

BPA conducted background research and an intensive subsurface field survey of the Area of Potential Effects (APE). No historic or cultural resources were identified within the APE. Therefore on April 6, 2021, BPA determined that the proposed undertaking would result in no historic properties affected (BPA CR Project No.: WA 2020 223; DAHP Log No.: 2020-12-07600-BPA). Concurrence with BPA's determination was received from DAHP on April 6, 2021. No additional comments were received.

Notes:

- Implement the Post Review Discovery Procedure in the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during implementation. Discontinue all ground-disturbing activity in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA and in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would permanently disturb approximately 6,000 square feet (0.14 acre) from grading, compacting, and surfacing the walking trail. Soil compaction and rutting due to vehicle and equipment use would result in additional temporary soil impacts along

the margins of the trail route. Temporarily disturbed soils would eventually stabilize as vegetation is reestablished and would return to pre-existing conditions following completion of the proposed action. The Holt Group would be responsible for implementing standard construction best management practices (BMPs) to minimize soil erosion, sedimentation, and fugitive dust. The proposed action would not impact geology.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would permanently clear or bury up to approximately 6,000 square feet (0.14 acre) of common, low-growing shrubs, grasses, and forbs, where present within the walking trail prism. Although the trail would be routed to avoid trees to the greatest extent possible, some trees could be removed if they cannot be avoided or if they present a potential safety hazard (i.e., trees that are dead or dying and leaning over the trail route). Vehicle and equipment use could temporarily crush or strip additional low-growing vegetation along the margins of the trail route. Temporarily disturbed areas would eventually revegetate and would return to pre-existing conditions following completion of the proposed action. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status plant species near the project site, and no suitable special-status species habitat is present. Therefore, the proposed action would have no effect on special-status plant species or habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary wildlife disturbance could occur from construction noise. It is expected that most species would be able to move out of the area during construction and then would return following completion of the proposed action. It is unlikely that recreational users walking along the trail would disturb wildlife as species that could be present in the area would likely be habituated to this level of disturbance given surrounding land uses. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status wildlife species near the project site, and no suitable special-status species habitat is present. Therefore, the proposed action would have no effect on special-status wildlife species or habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No water bodies, floodplains, or fish habitat are located within the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies or floodplains and would have no effect on special-status fish species or habitat.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are located within the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground disturbance would not reach depths to groundwater, and the proposed action would not generate or use hazardous materials that could contaminate groundwater or aquifers. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action could temporarily and intermittently impact nearby residential properties due to construction noise, which would only occur during daylight hours (approximately 7 AM to 7 PM). The proposed walking trail would provide a new recreational opportunity for the public without substantially changing the existing land use. There would be no permanent impact to adjacent land uses, and the proposed action would not impact any specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would result in a perceptible change in the appearance of the project site. During construction, the presence of construction equipment and general construction activities, including vegetation disturbance, would cause temporary visual impacts. The trail would be surfaced with wood chips or gravel, which would be a permanent visual change from the current, natural ground cover. However, the walking trail would be routed within the existing tree line and largely would not be visible from adjacent properties. The project site is not located in a visually sensitive area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would generate minor and temporary dust and emissions in the local area. The Holt Group would be responsible for implementing standard construction BMPs to minimize dust. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the proposed action.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would generate minor and temporary equipment noise during construction, which could be audible from nearby residential properties. Noise impacts would be temporary and would only occur during daylight hours (approximately 7 AM to 7 PM). There would be no permanent change in ambient noise following completion of the proposed action.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All standard safety protocols would be followed throughout implementation of the proposed action to minimize risk to human health and safety. Therefore, the proposed action would not be expected to impact human health and safety.

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: The proposed action would occur on BPA fee-owned property. No landowner notification, involvement, or coordination would be required.

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

Signed: /s/ Walker Stinnette
Walker Stinnette
Environmental Protection Specialist

2/7/2024
Date