

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: American Forest Management Access Road Use and Construction on North Bonneville-Midway No. 1 and Underwood Tap to Bonneville PH1-Alcoa No. 1&2

Project No.: LURR 20240140, LURR 20240152

Project Manager: Ryan Tanner TERR-3

Location: Skamania and Klickitat Counties, 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 American Forest Management (AFM) use of established access roads within BPA fee-owned rights-of-way (ROW) of the North Bonneville-Midway No. 1 (NBON-MIDW-1) and Underwood Tap to Bonneville PH1-Alcoa No 1&2 (UNDDT-BOAL-2) transmission lines for access to adjacent timber land for logging operations. In Skamania County, AFM requests use of established access roads located between structures 12/2 through 12/5 of the NBON-MIDW-1 transmission line for access to KC Valley LLC property. In Klickitat County, AFM requests use of the established access roads intersecting Klickitat-Appleton Road continuing northeast up to structure 42/1 of the NBON-MIDW-1 transmission line for access to Broughton Lumber Co (BLC) property.

In addition, BPA proposes to allow AFM to construct a temporary spur road at each location to connect the existing access roads to the adjacent lumber properties. In Skamania County, a spur road approximately 180 feet long and 12 feet wide would be constructed between structures 12/3 and 12/4 for access into the north bordering KC Valley LLC property from the existing access road within BPA fee-owned ROW. Additionally, AFM would improve an existing spur road 100 feet back-on-line of structure 12/3, if required. In Klickitat County, a spur road would be constructed within BPA fee-owned ROW approximately 90 feet long and 12 feet wide between structure 41/6 and 42/1 for access into the north bordering BLC property from the existing access road. Spur roads would be constructed using an excavator to establish a designated roadbed with grading to ensure a smooth running surface. All spur road surfaces would be of native soil and subject to use only under favorable weather conditions to reduce sediment erosion.

Equipment to be used within the BPA ROW by AFM includes trucks, tracked excavators, shovels, tracked skidders, rubber-tired skidders, and graders. Grading on existing access roads would be minor to ensure even ground surface and a smooth transition between ROW entry point and adjoining access road. All BPA ROW access roads would be restored to current or better conditions following logging operations which may or may not be limited to re-rocking, grading, and water bars. Constructed spur roads would require water bars, and AFM would be required to regrade and reseed the spur roads with native plants to allow vegetation to return following the project operations.

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.

Justin Olmsted
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
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: American Forest Management Access Road Use and Construction on North Bonneville-Midway No. 1 and Underwood Tap to Bonneville PH1-Alcoa No. 1&2

Project Site Description

The actions performed by American Forest Management (AFM) would be located in Skamania and Klickitat Counties, Washington. All work would be done in existing and managed BPA ROW and on private timber and forested land. Areas of access in Skamania County would be WA Township 3 North, Range 8 East, Section 26. Areas of access in Klickitat County would be WA Township 4 North, Range 13 East, Section 30. The proposed sites have previous ground disturbances and are located in areas that use graveled access roads and have compacted soils. In Skamania County, the surrounding area consists of private timber land holdings, residential properties, and some agricultural lands. An intermittent and seasonally flooded streambed and wetland exists between structures 12/4 and 12/5 of the North Bonneville-Midway No. 1 transmission line ROW. The established access road currently crosses the streambed and adjoining wetland, with a culvert approximately 18 inches in diameter which allows water passage to the southwest. The existing gravel access road is used to cross this wetland, and an existing culvert is in place for water passage underneath the access road. The Klickitat County location is surrounded with private timber land holdings and rural properties. Both locations consist of vegetation within the ROW that is routinely managed by mowing and/or lopping and scattering to prevent large woody species from growing into the transmission lines. Current vegetation consists of a mix of common, low-growing herbaceous and shrub species.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On June 21st, 2024, and June 26th, 2024, BPA initiated National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 consultation for LURR 20240152 and LURR 20240140, respectively, with the following parties:

- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon
- Cowlitz Indian Tribe
- Nez Perce Tribe
- Washington Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation (DAHP)

BPA conducted background research and a field survey of the Area of Potential Effects (APE). No previously recorded historic or cultural resources were located within the APE, and no new historic or cultural resources were identified during the field survey. Therefore, BPA determined that the proposed undertaking would result in no historic properties affected (BPA CR Project No.: WA 2024 120; WA 2024 131). Concurrence with BPA's determination was received from DAHP on June 24, 2024, for LURR 20240152 and on July 2, 2024, for LURR 20240140. No other comments were received.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Access road use would occur on an existing road prism. The construction of a new spur road in both Skamania and Klickitat Counties would involve removing a vegetated layer to exposed soil within BPA right-of-way. Upon completion of project activities, all existing access roads would be placed in as good or better condition than current state. The constructed spur roads would be regraded and reseeded with native plants following project activities. Storm water BMPs (i.e., erosion control measures and water bars) would be used during the project to protect the surrounding area from runoff and erosion.

Notes:

- American Forest Management is required to properly remove and dispose of any displaced soil originating from the BPA fee-owned ROW.
- Existing access roads would be stabilized with road surface material (rock) and erosion control measures

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Work would occur in areas maintained as an open transmission line ROW corridor. Less than one acre of vegetation would be removed for each spur road construction site, and minimal vegetation may be removed or crushed at adjoining spur road sites. All constructed spur roads would be regraded and reseeded with native plant species following project activities. No special-status plants or Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed plants would be impacted from project activities. No ESA-listed plant species are present in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Any local wildlife in the immediate work area would be temporarily disturbed by noise and increased human presence at varying times during access road work and during the construction of the spur roads. Adjacent habitat would be available for the temporarily disturbed wildlife species. The Skamania County, WA site is located a quarter-mile outside of Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) critical habitat, which is a mix of unsuitable and marginal habitat with limited dispersal forest. No known sightings of NSO have been observed in this area. Due to the frequency of logging operations throughout this area, combined with the marginal habitat outside a quarter-mile, BPA has determined that the projects would have “no effect” on ESA listed species or their critical habitat. No other special-status wildlife would be impacted by project activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project does not include any in-water work. All disturbed areas would be protected from runoff by use of appropriate BMPs during project and stabilized upon completion of project activities.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: An established access road currently crosses the wetland between structures 12/4 and 12/5 of the ROW in Skamania County, Washington. A culvert approximately 18 inches in diameter allows water passage to the southwest. Water is presumed to be present for the duration of the project; however, spur road construction would occur 200 feet outside of the sensitive area and, therefore, would not have an impact to this wetland.

Notes:

- Stay on existing graveled access road when crossing over the sensitive area.
- Lay steel plate and extra gravel over culvert for heavy equipment crossing.
- Utilize standard construction BMPs to prevent spills of hazardous materials (i.e., fuels) throughout the project areas.
- Inform BPA and other appropriate authorities of any released or threatened release of hazardous substances in, or migrating into, the designated wetland.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities would not reach depths to ground water, and standard construction BMPs would be used to reduce the potential for inadvertent spills of hazardous materials that could contaminate groundwater or aquifers. All spills would be addressed immediately and follow BPA protocol for cleanup and regulatory notifications. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The portion of ROW AFM is requesting access to in Skamania County, Washington is located within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA) in a designated small-woodland land cover. BPA verified that AFM was in contact with the Skamania County Planning Department to ensure AFM actions are consistent with CRGNSA management plan. The project would not have any changes in land use or have an impact on Specially-Designated Areas.

Notes:

- AFM would be required to coordinate any project changes with Skamania County Planning Department and BPA.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed actions at existing infrastructure would not alter or effect visual quality. Any access road improvements and spur road constructions are similar to existing access roads and would not be visibly different from the existing road prisms.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The projects are of a short duration and would involve normal construction equipment activities. A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions is expected due to construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is located away from any residential areas on agricultural and forested land. Temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours for the extent of the project. No permanent noise increase is expected after projects are completed.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed projects are considered normal construction and maintenance.

Notes:

- Hazardous substances (i.e. fuels, herbicides, solvents, paints, etc.) are not authorized to be stored on BPA fee-owned property.

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 ROW use request is located on BPA fee-owned property at the Klickitat County, Washington site and both BPA fee-owned property and easement ROW at the Skamania County, Washington site. BPA would notify any other easement holders on the BPA property, if required. American Forest Management, KC Valley Inc., and Broughton Lumber Co. would be responsible for any adjacent landowner notification, involvement, or coordination, if required.

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

Signed:

Justin Olmsted
Environmental Protection Specialist