

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Little Goose-Lower Granite Access Road Improvement

PP&A No.: 5068

Project Manager: Donna Martin – TELF-TPP-3

Location: Columbia County, Washington

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

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to perform routine road maintenance along BPA's Little Goose-Lower Granite No. 1 transmission line which involves reconstruction and repair/improvement of an approximate 2.6-mile-long segment of deteriorated gravel and dirt road which would provide access to Little Goose-Lower Granite No. 1 transmission line structures 8/1 to 8/4 in Columbia County, Washington.

Reconstructing the road would include re-establishing the existing road, grading and reconstructing drainages. Road improvement and reconstruction would be needed to upgrade existing access roads and provide work areas at structures. Improvement of about 0.8 mile (4,300 feet) of existing road would include grading and placing rock with no widening. Reconstruction of about 1.8 miles (9,900 feet) of existing road would include grading, placing rock, and widening to about 20 feet. Work would be conducted with the use of dump trucks, excavators, drum compactors, and graders. A staging area would be located at the beginning of the project at 6/1 006-04-1 and would be approximately 0.3 acres in area. The staging area is already rocked and has been used previously.

Improvements would also include maintenance of erosion control and water drainage features within the project area. Additional road improvements would include installation of 15 rock water bars, 11 drain dips, and 1 new range gate.

This work would provide access for maintenance crews that will be maintaining the transmission line and towers within the transmission line corridors. No unauthorized construction activities would occur in any water body including streams, ponds, wetlands, etc.

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/ Julianna Martin

Julianna Martin
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer Date: October 16, 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: Little Goose-Lower Granite Access Road Improvement

Project Site Description

The proposed project is located in Columbia County, Washington within the Columbia Plateau ecoregion of eastern Washington, characterized by a semi-arid sagebrush steppe ecosystem that has been, in some regions, converted into agricultural lands. The project area is south of the Snake River and wetlands identified on the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI), west of Wild Goose Creek, and the surrounding area is rural with agricultural land uses. The project area passes through is a combination of private, US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and BPA owned property.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Nez Perce Tribe, and Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) on February 21, 2024, and received a response from the DAHP on February 22, 2024, concurring with the Area of Potential Effects (APE). No other responses were received.

In coordination with the USACE, BPA conducted background research followed by an intensive field survey of the APE in May 2024 and wrote a report summarizing findings. No historic properties were identified. BPA determined that implementation of the project would result in no historic properties affected and sent the report and determination letter to consulting parties on June 28, 2024. On July 1, 2024, the Nez Perce Tribe responded in an email requesting supplemental background information be added to the report. BPA consulted with the Tribe individually and resubmitted a final report on September 12, 2024. BPA's determination of no historic properties affected remained unchanged. DAHP concurred with the determination in a letter dated October 7, 2024. No other consulting parties responded.

Conditions:

- BPA's Post-Review Discovery Procedures would be included as a condition of BPA's environmental clearance. In the event that cultural material is unexpectedly encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA would require that work be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they could be inspected and assessed by a professional archaeologist.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Soils within and near the road prism would be moved during grading and ground disturbance. During construction, all appropriate BMPs would be used to implement site-specific erosion and sediment control. All disturbed areas would be stabilized and seeded.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would not impact any special-status species. There would be no effect to ESA-listed species in the area. Only necessary vegetation would be removed. Any disturbed areas would be stabilized and seeded with a geographic and climate-appropriate seed mix.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project may cause temporary disturbance to local wildlife from associated construction activities and noise. The project locations are not within or near any designated critical habitats or known occupied sites for sensitive species. Due to the lack of suitable habitat and no known presence in the project areas, 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: Work would not occur in the FEMA floodplains adjacent (northeast) to the project area. Some work would occur in dry drainages that exhibit only ephemeral flow. The Snake River contains resident fish but no in-water work would occur. Typical erosion control BMPs would be implemented to prevent sediment from reaching any nearby waterbodies, and no riparian habitat would be affected.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Work would not occur in the NWI wetlands northeast of the project area and BMPs would be implemented to prevent sediment from reaching the nearby wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or use of groundwater proposed. Spill prevention measures would be present on site. The project would not provide a pathway to groundwater contamination.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use would occur and projected activities would not impact land use.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed improvements are consistent with the surroundings and would not significantly change the existing visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Small amounts of dust and vehicle emissions due to construction would be generated.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Noise disturbance would be limited to general construction equipment activities, would be for a short duration, and would only occur during daylight hours.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No known hazardous conditions are known. Completion of this project would increase system stability and reliability in the service area.

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: All activities would be coordinated with landowners and land managers prior to beginning work.

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

Signed: /s/ Julianna Martin

Julianna Martin

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: October 16, 2024