

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Shelton-Fairmount No. 2 Line Miles 49 & 50 Structure Relocation project

PP&A No.: 5075

Project Manager: Rusty Ludt, TEPL-TPP-1

Location: Jefferson County, Washington

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 raise and/or relocate six wood pole structures along the Shelton-Fairmount No. 2 transmission line to accommodate the Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group and the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe’s Lower Big Quilcene Riverscape Project.

BPA owns and operates the high voltage Shelton-Fairmount No. 2 transmission line, which runs from Shelton Substation in Mason County, WA, to Fairmount Substation in Jefferson County, WA. The line is 115 kV and supported by wood poles. In line miles 49 and 50 of the transmission line, as it trends northward from Shelton Substation, near the town of Quilcene, WA, the line runs near the lower Big Quilcene River. The Big Quilcene River and surrounding landscape is subject to recurrent, periodic flooding. The river’s channel was historically straightened and entrenched, which exacerbates the flooding. In an effort to reduce flooding and restore salmon habitat, the Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group and the Jamestown S’Klallam Tribe have partnered as proponents of the Lower Big Quilcene Riverscape Project. The project is designed to restore a more natural meandering channel to the river, remove levies and restore the river’s connection to the floodplain.

In order to facilitate the new channel orientation, BPA would raise and/or relocate six wood pole structures in the vicinity of the Lower Big Quilcene Riverscape Project. Specifically, BPA would raise structure 49/4 approximately 5 feet in the existing wood pole location. Structure 49/5 would be raised approximately 10 feet and moved back-on-line approximately 80 feet from the existing structure. Structure 49/6 would be raised in-place approximately 15 feet. Structure 49/7 would be moved approximately 150 feet ahead-on-line and raised approximately 15 feet. Structure 49/8 would also be moved approximately 150 feet ahead-on-line and raised approximately 10 feet. Existing structure 49/9 would be removed, and structure 50/1 would be raised in the existing location approximately 10 feet. Guy wires and anchors would be added to 50/1 for additional support. Pole wraps and culvert footings would be installed around the treated wood poles within wetlands to protect water quality.

The transmission line work would be completed by BPA’s transmission line maintenance crews using standard equipment such as utility bucket trucks and a backhoe using existing access roads and overland travel routes. No road work is planned, and no in-water work is proposed. Wetland

matts would be used in those locations in wetlands where ground conditions necessitate additional support for heavy equipment. The work is planned for fall of 2024 and would take approximately 2 – 4 weeks.

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/ Aaron Siemers

Aaron Siemers

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: Shelton-Fairmount No. 2 Line Miles 49 & 50 Structure Relocation project

Project Site Description

The proposed action is located in the town of Quilcene, WA, in the Olympic Peninsula, in Jefferson County. It is located in the Olympic Rainshadow level IV ecoregion, which is a small ecoregion that receives significantly less precipitation and more sunlight than the rest of the Olympic Peninsula due to the rain shadow effect of the nearby mountains. The project area is located on privately-owned land. The terrain is flat and near sea level, with reed canary grass, Himalayan blackberry, and other common vegetation present. The area has wetlands scattered throughout, and the Lower Big Quilcene River runs in span 49/4. The river provides habitat to ESA-listed salmonid species and bull trout. Quilcene Bay is located within 1000 feet of structure 49/4 to the southeast.

The proposed action would occur within, and immediately adjacent to, BPA right-of-way (ROW) and access roads for the Shelton-Fairmount No. 2 transmission line. BPA does not own the property on which the transmission lines are located, but rather has easement rights to operate and maintain the transmission lines and access roads. The cleared transmission corridor is approximately 250 feet wide, and the Shelton-Fairmount No. 2 line shares the corridor with the Shelton-Fairmount No. 1, and the Shelton-Fairmount No. 3&4 high voltage transmission lines. Vegetation in the corridor is periodically managed to remove tall-growing tree species and promote low-growing grasses and shrubs.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA archaeologists review the proposed work and Area of Potential Effects (APE) for historic and cultural resources and compliance with Section 7 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). The project area is located within the Area of Potential Effects of the larger planned Shelton – Fairmount No. 1 rebuild, which is scheduled to begin in 2025. No historic or cultural resources were identified during the records search and field surveys associated with the larger rebuild project. However, certain locations within the APE could not be accessed due to the presence of standing water at the time of the survey.

Based on the previous surveys in and near the APE, on September 13th, 2024, BPA initiated consultation under Section 106 of the NHPA and determined that the proposed undertaking would have no adverse effects to historic properties, with the stipulation of having an archaeological monitor present during construction activities since not all locations could be fully investigated during previous field surveys. Consulting parties included the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, the Skokomish Indian Tribe, the Squaxin Island Tribe, The Suquamish Tribe, and the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). During the 30-day review

and comment period, BPA received concurrence with the determination from DAHP, the Suquamish Tribe, and the Squaxin Tribe. The remaining consulting parties did not respond with comments.

Notes:

- Archaeological monitors would be present during ground disturbing activities
- BPA would implement post discovery review procedures in the event that cultural resources were inadvertently encountered during project activities

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Soils in the project area are silts and sandy loams associated with the floodplain and mouth of the Big Quilcene River. The soils would be impacted by the removal and replacement of the wood pole transmission structures, however impacts would be limited to the extent of the excavations, and soils would be backfilled upon installation of the new wood poles. Soils would also be compacted by the placement of wetland mats where necessary, however impacts would again be limited to those locations near wood poles and along existing routes of travel within BPA's easements, and due to the soil conditions, climate and vegetation, would likely not have permanent impacts to the soils. No bedrock geology is expected to be encountered during project activities. The terrain is flat, and erosion and sedimentation risk is expected to be low.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The proposed project would temporarily impact the vegetation in the immediate vicinity, including by excavation and removal, and crushing. However, impacts would be limited to the BPA transmission easement, at the specific work locations detailed in the project summary. Vegetation disturbance is expected to be within approximately 50 feet of the wood pole removal and replacement locations. Vegetation consists of common grasses such as Reed canary grass and native species. Himalayan blackberry and other shrub species are also present. Upon installation of the new wood pole structures, BPA would backfill and restore the grade. Vegetation impacts would be temporary and are expected to return to current conditions within one to two growing seasons.

BPA obtained an official species list from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on September 16th, 2024. No special status plant species are listed in the project area. In addition, no special status state listed species are present in the project area.

Notes:

- BPA would seed disturbed soils with a climate appropriate native seed mix upon project completion

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would create noise and disturbance associated with construction activities that could temporarily displace common wildlife in the project area such as birds and mammals. However, disturbance would be temporary and entirely located within the existing transmission easement. In addition, the surrounding landscape provides ample habitat for any wildlife disturbed by the project activities to relocate.

BPA obtained an official species list from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on September 16th, 2024. BPA determined that the proposed action would have "No effect" on all listed

species in the project area, including marbled murrelet, yellow-billed cuckoo, northwestern pond turtle, and the candidate species monarch butterfly. No critical habitat is present in the project area. No special status state-listed wildlife species are documented in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The lower Big Quilcene River runs through span 49/4 of the project area and the project is located within the flood plain of the river. The river has documented ESA-listed salmonids such as coho, chum and Chinook salmon, as well as bull trout, and is designated critical habitat for Hood Canal summer-run chum salmon. However, no in-water work is planned within the river, and no water quality impacts are anticipated from the proposed project to the Big Quilcene River. The planned project would not create any additional fill material within the Big Quilcene River floodplain, as the scope entails replacing and relocating existing transmission infrastructure.

Quilcene Bay is located within 1000 feet of structure 49/4 to the southeast. No impacts to Quilcene Bay are anticipated.

Notes:

- BPA would implement best management practices (BMPs) to limit ground disturbance within the Big Quilcene River floodplain, e.g. installation of wetland mats and erosion and sediment control BMPs as necessary.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: A wetland and waterway delineation was conducted in 2021 in the project area and identified several non-tidal wetlands in the project area. The majority of the structure work would occur in jurisdictional wetlands, classified as emergent palustrine wetlands.

Section 404 of the Clean Water Act regulates dredge and fill activity in wetlands. Due to the limited scope and footprint of the project, the proposed action would be permitted under a non-notifying Nationwide Permit No. 57, which covers Electric Utility Line and Telecommunications Activities with limited impacts to wetlands and waterways.

Notes:

- BPA would implement best management practices (BMPs) to limit impacts to wetlands, e.g. installation of wetland mats and erosion and sediment control BMPs as necessary.
- Pole wraps would be installed around the treated wood poles to minimize wood treatment chemical mobility into the surrounding wetlands

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Excavations to remove and install new wood pole transmission structures would not be at a depth that would encounter groundwater and aquifers. The project area is located in and near wetlands, some in saturated conditions, and others with water relatively near surface. Temporary impacts to water quality would occur during excavation and installation of new transmission structures. However, potential impacts would be localized near the work sites.

Notes:

- BPA would implement best management practices (BMPs) to limit impacts to wetlands, e.g. installation of wetland mats and erosion and sediment control BMPs as necessary.
- Pole wraps would be installed around the treated wood poles to minimize wood treatment chemical mobility into the surrounding wetlands
- Culvert footings would be utilized to stabilize excavations, place wood poles, and backfill, which would mitigate potential impacts to near surface groundwater and wetlands.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Current land use, which is rural residential, agricultural, and high voltage transmission right-of-way, would not be impacted by the proposed project.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not change the current visual profile of the transmission line and surrounding landscape. The proposed action would align the Shelton-Fairmount No. 2 wood pole structures more closely to the Shelton-Fairmount No. 1 wood pole structures, which would concentrate the footprint of the overall transmission system in the area, leaving more general areas for vegetation and reduced human activity.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would have relatively insignificant, temporary impacts to air quality associated with vehicular traffic and construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would have relatively insignificant, temporary noise impacts associated with vehicular traffic and construction. The project is in a rural area without many human receptors.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA's transmission line maintenance crews would hold daily safety meetings prior to beginning work and would follow all BPA construction standards and safety protocols. The project would make the Shelton-Fairmount No. 2 transmission line more resilient and robust by replacing older structure elements with new structures, which would have beneficial effects on 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: BPA has engaged with landowners in the project area and would continue to coordinate construction activities with all affected parties.

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

Signed: /s/ Aaron Siemers

Aaron Siemers
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: October 16, 2024