

memorandum

DATE: July 19, 2012

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: KEC-4

SUBJECT: Environmental Clearance Memorandum

TO: Brandee Shoemaker
Project Manager – TERM-TPP-4

Proposed Action: Schultz-Raver No.1 Right-Of-Way (ROW) Marking Project

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

Location: Kittitas County, Washington

Proposed by: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA is proposing to survey and mark the northern boundary of its transmission line ROW for the Schultz-Raver No.1 and Schultz-Echo Lake No.1 transmission line corridor in Kittitas County, WA. Due to high development pressure, a lack of visible signage, and incomplete county records, encroachments into the ROW have occurred in the form of structures, trails, and county roads. The installation of signs to mark BPA's transmission line ROW would prevent further encroachment from homeowners and developers, ensure the safety of nearby residents, and allow for the continued safe maintenance and operation of BPA's transmission lines.

BPA would install approximately 270 signs along the northern boundary of a 19-mile portion of the transmission line ROW between structures 16/2 and 35/2. Prior to sign installation, a survey would be completed by BPA survey crews to locate the center-line and limits of BPA's ROW, with markers placed to indicate sign locations. The signs would be durable plastic, with approximate dimensions of 10 x 13 inches, and would be attached to 3 to 4 inch wide galvanized steel posts. The posts would be driven approximately 2 feet into the ground by hand using a pole pounder, and stand 4 feet 8 inches high.

The proposed project would permanently disturb an area approximately 3-4 inches wide by 2 feet deep to accommodate each sign installed along BPA's transmission line corridor ROW. Temporary minor disturbance of vegetation within BPA-owned ROW in the vicinity of each proposed sign location may occur as necessary to provide clear sight-lines for survey reconnaissance and sign installation. Existing access roads would be utilized by 2-3 person survey crews for ROW access by vehicle for transporting signs and other equipment, minimizing disturbance from vehicular traffic associated with the project.

Resource Review: BPA reviewed potential impacts to vegetation, wetlands and floodplains, water, federally listed species and critical habitat, and cultural resources by the proposed project. *Existing Environment.* The project area is located along the northern edge of BPA's transmission line ROW for the Schultz-Raver No.1 and Schultz-Echo Lake No.1 transmission line corridor, extending 19 miles between structure 16/2 (near I-90 southeast of the City of Cle Elum) west and structure 35/2 (south of the City of Easton). The project area lies north of South Cle Elum ridge at elevations between 2160 feet and 2600 feet, and is within the Upper Yakima Watershed. The landscape along the length of the ROW includes fir- and pine-dominated forests, riparian and wetland areas, farmland, and rural farmhouses or large-lot subdivisions. There are multiple perennial streams and jurisdictional wetland complexes throughout the project area. Much of the ROW is previously disturbed from the initial construction of the transmission line, structures, and access roads, and ongoing operations and maintenance activities.

Vegetation. Disturbance of vegetation within the ROW in the vicinity of each proposed sign location would include trimming of shrubs and removal of some branches, which is consistent with BPA's existing vegetation management practices within its ROW.

Wetlands and Floodplains. According to the National Wetland Inventory (NWI) there are multiple jurisdictional wetland complexes throughout the project area. The ROW also crosses 100-year floodplains along Big Creek and Little Creek. The activities associated with sign installation will have **no effect** on wetlands and floodplains.

Water. The Yakima River lies north of the project area, flowing within 0.35 miles of the ROW at its nearest point. The ROW also crosses numerous perennial streams and tributaries of the Yakima River. Construction activities will not contribute to erosion or release material into streams, and will have **no effect** on water resources.

Federally Listed Species and Critical Habitat. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) federally listed species in Kittitas County includes eight threatened or endangered species (bull trout [*Salvelinus confluentus*], steelhead [*Oncorhynchus mykiss*], Canada lynx [*Lynx Canadensis*], gray wolf [*Canis lupus*], grizzly bear [*Ursus arctos horribilis*], marbled murrelet [*Brachyramphus marmoratus*], northern spotted owl [*Strix occidentalis caurina*], and Ute ladies'-tresses [*Spiranthes diluvialis*]). The proposed project will have **no effect** on these species or their critical habitat because suitable habitat does not exist within the project area, or project activities will not disturb individuals that may be present.

Cultural Resources. On May 1, 2012, BPA initiated Section 106 consultation with the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation. Background research conducted by the consulting firm Archaeological and Historical Services (AHS) between June 6 and 15, 2012, identified three cultural resource sites within BPA's Area of Potential Effect (APE). Based on the background research and avoidance of the three known sites, BPA determined the proposed project would have **no effect** on cultural resources or historic properties. BPA and sent letters notifying the Washington DAHP and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation of this determination on June 18, 2012. The Washington DAHP concurred with BPA's determination in a letter dated June 21, 2012, and no response was received from the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation.

Findings: BPA has determined that the proposed action complies with Section 1021.410 and Appendix B of Subpart D 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, July 9, 1996; 61 FR 64608, Dec. 6, 1996, 76 FR 63764, Nov. 14, 2011). The proposed action does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal. The proposal is not connected [40 C.F.R. 1508.25(a)(1)] to other actions with potentially significant impacts, has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion, is not related to other proposed actions with cumulatively significant impacts [40 C.F.R. 1508.25(a)(2)], and is not precluded by 40 C.F.R. 1506.1 or 10 C.F.R. 1021.211. Moreover, the proposed action would not (i) threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, (ii) require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities, (iii) disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act-excluded petroleum and natural gas products that pre-exist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases, (iv) have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources, or (v) 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.

Based on the provisions identified on the attachment, this proposed action meets the requirements for the Categorical Exclusion referenced above. We therefore determine that the proposed action may be categorically excluded from further NEPA review and documentation.

/s/ Zachary R. Gustafson
Zachary R. Gustafson
Environmental Project Manager

Concur:

/s/ Katherine S. Pierce
Katherine S. Pierce
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: July 19, 2012

Attachments:
Environmental Checklist for Categorical Exclusions
Provisions

Environmental Checklist for Categorical Exclusions

Name of Proposed Project: Schultz-Raver No.1 Right-Of-Way Marking Project

Work Order #: 308499

This project does not have the potential to cause significant impacts on the following environmentally sensitive resources. See 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B for complete descriptions of the resources. This checklist is to be used as a summary – further discussion may be included in the Categorical Exclusion Memorandum.

<u>Environmental Resources</u>	<u>No Potential for Significance</u>	<u>No Potential, with Conditions (describe)</u>
1. Historic Properties and Cultural Resources Avoid installing signs and conducting project-related activities within the three cultural resource sites identified in the cultural resources report prepared by Archaeological and Historical Services and submitted to BPA on June 15, 2012.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. T & E Species, or their habitat(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Floodplains or wetlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Areas of special designation Avoid installing signs within the 1,400 foot section of R.O.W. which crosses the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest in Township 19 North, Range 14 East, Section 4.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Health & safety	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Prime or unique farmlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Special sources of water	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Other (describe)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signed: /s/ Zachary Gustafson

Date:

July 19, 2012

Provisions

This categorical exclusion will meet the following provisions:

National Forest

- Avoid installing signs within the 1,400 foot section of ROW which crosses the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest in Township 19 North, Range 14 East, Section 4.

Cultural Resources

- Avoid installing signs or conducting project-related activities within the three cultural resource sites identified in the cultural resources report prepared by AHS and submitted to BPA on June 15, 2012.

In the event any archaeological or historical material is encountered during project activities, the following actions should be taken:

- Stop work in the vicinity and immediately notify the BPA environmental lead, a BPA archaeologist, appropriate BPA project staff, interested Tribes, Washington DAHP, and the appropriate county, state, and federal agencies.
- Implement reasonable measures to protect the discovery site, including any appropriate stabilization or covering.
- Take reasonable steps to ensure the confidentiality of the discovery site, including restricting access.