

# memorandum

DATE: June 30, 2014

REPLY TO  
ATTN OF: KEP-CELILO

SUBJECT: Environmental Clearance Memorandum

TO: Chad Hamel  
Civil Engineer – TEP-TPP-1

**Proposed Action:** Palisades-Swan Valley transmission line rebuild

**PP&A Project Number:** 2962

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B4.13 Upgrading and rebuilding existing powerlines

**Location:** Bonneville Power Administration's (BPA) Idaho Falls District. Project locations are listed below:

Township	Range	Section(s)	County	Use	Ownership
2N	44E	35	Bonneville	Agriculture	Private
1N	43E	1, 2	Bonneville	Agriculture	Private
1N	44E	6, 7, 8, 16, 17, 22, 26, 27, 35, 36	Bonneville	Agriculture/ Forest	Private/ Government
1S	45E	5, 6, 8	Bonneville	Forest	Government

**Proposed by:** BPA

**Description of the Proposed Action:** BPA proposes to rebuild the existing Palisades-Swan Valley 115-kilovolt (kV) transmission line. The 12.5 mile long transmission line begins at the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) Substation at Palisades Dam and ends at BPA's Swan Valley Substation, in Swan Valley, Idaho. The line parallels U.S. Highway 26 and crosses predominately fields used for hay production and pasture, in addition to rangeland.

Rebuilding this transmission line would allow BPA to maintain reliable electric service to local utilities, avoid risks to the public, and ensure worker safety. The rebuild is needed because the transmission line, which was built in the early 1940s, shows normal deterioration due to age. Also, the original conductor has not been replaced and does not meet current utility standards.

The proposed project would include replacing transmission line components including wood-pole transmission structures, associated structural components, and conductors. Wood poles would be removed and replaced with structural components of similar design within or near their existing locations. In each case, an additional earthen landing, approximately 50 feet by 50 feet may be constructed or improved adjacent to each tower to safely support equipment.

The line would be rebuilt to 230-kV capacity but would operate at 115-kV upon completion. The reason for the 230-kV construction is to allow the line to operate at a higher capacity in the future without needing to rebuild the line again. Some existing access roads would need to be improved to provide access for construction equipment and some new access roads may need to be constructed to reach structures for which BPA does not presently have adequate access. Also, BPA's current right-of-way is not uniform in width throughout the extent of the transmission line, varying in width from zero to 150-feet. New uniform right-of-way to a width of 125 feet will be acquired for this project.

A letter notifying the public of the project was sent in April 2013 and a public meeting was held on May 15th, 2013 in order to provide information and answer questions regarding the project. BPA has also worked and coordinated with the BOR and Idaho Department of Fish and Game to avoid or mitigate potential impacts. Concerns raised by the public and agencies regarding potential tree removal, relocation of structure 4/7, and bird collisions, have been addressed by changes in project design.

In response to Sec. 7 of the Endangered Species Act, BPA has prepared an Endangered Species Act Effects Determination for the project. It was determined that T&E listed species are far outside of the project area and no documented sightings have been recorded in the project area. Furthermore, the project area does not provide for suitable habitat conditions for the above-mentioned species and no in-stream work will be conducted. No designated critical habitat or essential fish habitat (EFH) occurs in the project area. A determination of "No Effect" was made for all ESA listed species and designated critical habitat, and EFH. Also, BPA has developed recommended conservation measures that will be included in the plans and contract specifications for the project to protect other managed species and habitat.

Wetlands occur sporadically throughout the project area; however, no new structures or access would be placed in wetlands. Wetlands and surface waters will be protected from stormwater related impacts by implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to prevent erosion and control surface runoff.

A cultural resources survey and inventory of the project area was completed and on May 30, 2014, the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred that the proposed action would have no adverse effect on historic properties. The Shoshone Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Indian Reservation Tribes were also consulted and had no comment on the project.

Equipment needed to perform the work would include a line truck with auger attachment, small crane for lifting tower components, bucket trucks, puller-tensioner, dump trucks, road grader, and roller-compactor. A bulldozer may be used to construct earthen landings at the tower sites to ensure that equipment can be operated safely. All work will be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA standards.

**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) 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.

With the actions identified on the attachment, this proposed action meets the requirements for the Categorical Exclusion referenced above. Therefore, BPA has determined that the proposed action may be categorically excluded from further NEPA review and documentation.

/s/ Philip W. Smith, for:

Frederick J. Walasavage  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur: /s/ Stacy Mason

Stacy Mason  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: June 30, 2014

Attachments:

Environmental Checklist for Categorical Exclusions  
Effects Determination for T&E Species

## Environmental Checklist for Categorical Exclusions

**Name of Proposed Project:** Palisades-Swan Valley 115- kV Transmission Line  
Rebuild

**Work Order #:** 305363

**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 ▪ ID SHPO concurred with the finding of “No Adverse Effect” on May 30, 2014	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input 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 Mule deer wintering grounds on State lands from structures 5/6 to 7/1. See attached provisions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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) See attached provisions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

List supporting documentation attached (if needed):  
Provisions

Signed: /s/ Frederick J. Walasavage

Date: May 27, 2014

Frederick J. Walasavage, KEP/Celilo

## PROVISIONS

The following provisions are to be included with the contractor specifications.

**Trumpeter Swans** - Bird flight diverters will be placed on all the spans from 9/3-10/2 and 12/1-13/1 to include all three phases of each span. The placement frequency and diverter type has been coordinated through the Idaho Department of Fish and game.

### **Deer Wintering Grounds – Structures 5/6 to 7/1.**

- Only those trees and/or vegetation that currently violate, or have the potential to violate BPA or NESC safety standards will be removed or trimmed.
- Low growing vegetation will not be disturbed except around structures, on roads where construction requirements dictate, or in areas where low growing vegetation is in violation of the previously mentioned clearance and safety standards. Vegetation removal along roadways will not extend more than two feet from road shoulder.
- Junipers within the right-of-way and not underneath the conductors will be topped. Junipers directly below the conductors will be removed unless they are located close to a structure and are not likely to violate BPA or NESC safety standards. In such cases, junipers may be topped.
- Construction traffic will be limited to established roadways and landing.
- Limit access roads improvements to areas where existing conditions do not allow for construction equipment or safe travel and minimize access road improvement disturbance areas.
- Gates will be placed at access points on State property.
- No construction from November 1 through May 1.
- Wash construction vehicles to remove weed seeds prior to entry of State and Federal lands.

**Osprey Nesting** – No work will occur in the vicinity of known occupied osprey nests from March through July – a nest is known to exist at structure 13/1. Removal of the nest will be required for the upgrade and must be done so outside of restricted timeframe. A nesting structure will be placed in the immediate vicinity of structure 13/1.

**Cultural Resources** - In the event that archaeological or historic materials are discovered during project activities, work in the immediate vicinity must stop, the area will be secured and the SHPO and the environmental project lead must be notified. Work may not resume until the site has been cleared by the SHPO and appropriate tribes.

**Migratory Birds** - To avoid any potential nesting disturbance of migratory birds, no work will be conducted between May 1 and July 1.