

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Bonneville-Hood River No. 1 Insulator Replacement & Hardware Installation Project

PP&A No.: 3,756

Project Manager: Scott Williams – TFDF – The Dalles

Location: Multnomah County, OR

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

B1.3 Routine Maintenance

Description of the Proposed Action:

The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) owns and operates the Bonneville-Hood River No. 1 high voltage 115 kV transmission line, which runs from the Bonneville Dam powerhouse in Multnomah County, Oregon, to Hood River Substation in Hood River County, Oregon. The transmission line is aging and in need of repair, and the majority of the line is scheduled to be rebuilt starting in 2018.

In line mile 1 of the line as it emerges from Bonneville Dam powerhouse, transmission towers are in good condition and are not being considered for replacement during the 2018/2019 rebuild project. However, BPA is proposing to remove and replace aging hardware and insulators on five steel-lattice structures in line mile 1. Fall protection hardware would also be installed to meet current BPA safety standards.

No ground-disturbing work would be required at the five steel-lattice tower locations. Currently, paved access roads and landings are present at structures 1/1 and 1/3, and existing access roads and landings would be utilized to access structures 1/2, 1/4, and 1/5. Work would be conducted using standard utility bucket trucks, pickup trucks, and helicopter support. BPA would utilize a paved helipad in the Bonneville Dam locks area managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for the helicopter landing pad, and a fly yard and material staging yard would be located on a paved area approximately 150 feet to the west. All work would be conducted by BPA's Transmission Line Maintenance crew.

BPA would coordinate the project activities with the U.S. Forest Service and would be in communication with the operators at Bonneville Dam during construction activity to ensure normal lock operations and a safe construction environment. Traffic flaggers would also be employed as necessary during the project to help with traffic safety since the project is located near the I-84 corridor.

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, July 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 C. Siemers

Aaron C. Siemers
Environmental Scientist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: September 7, 2017

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.

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Project Site Description

The project is located in the Columbia River Gorge in the Western Cascades Lowlands & Valleys ecoregion. This ecoregion is characterized by a Pacific marine mild, wet climate and forests of western hemlock and Douglas-fir. The work area is near the Bonneville Lock & Dam within the Columbia River. Some of the work sites are located on an island within the river channel, with the locks located to the north and south. These locations are industrial and developed, and are part of the Bonneville Lock & Dam complex. The transmission line then crosses the river and trends southeast, crossing the railroad and the Interstate 84 transportation corridor. Transmission towers 1/3, 1/4, and 1/5 are located in cleared forest lands that comprises the 300 ft. wide transmission right-of-way. Vegetation includes native grasses, blackberry, sword fern, and oxeye daisy.

Township		Range		Section	County	Site Characteristics
2	N	7	E	21 & 22	Multnomah Co., OR	Western Cascades Lowlands & Valleys ecoregion

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> A BPA Archaeologist was consulted on the project, and it was determined that, due to the limited scope of the project, which does not include any ground-disturbing work or significant alterations to the transmission line or surrounding areas, there would be no changes in the character or use of historic or cultural resources.		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> The project does not include any ground-disturbing work. There is no potential for significant impacts to geology and soils.		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There are no special-status plant species present. Work is to be conducted in an existing transmission line right-of-way (ROW) using existing access roads and landings.		

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



Explanation:

BPA obtained an official species list from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on August 31, 2017. Northern spotted owl is listed as threatened in the work area. However, recent northern spotted owl nest surveys associated with the larger Bonneville-Hood River No. 1 rebuild project have not located any active nests or individual northern spotted owls in the project area. Therefore, the project would have "No Effect" on northern spotted owl and there is no potential for significant impacts to wildlife.

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



Bull trout and endangered anadromous salmonids are present in the Columbia River and protected under the Endangered Species Act. However, the project would not be located in a floodplain or any waterbody. The project does not involve any ground disturbance which could potentially impact water quality. Therefore, the project would have "No Effect" on bull trout and endangered salmonids, and there is no potential for significant impacts to water bodies, floodplains, and fish.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation:

There are no wetlands present in the project area.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation:

The work would not involve new groundwater wells or ground disturbance that would impact aquifers.

8. **Land Use and Specially Designated Areas**



Explanation:

The project area is located in the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area (Scenic Area). BPA has notified the U.S. Forest Service who manages activity within the Scenic Area of the project scope and timeline. The majority of the work area is located in the urban management zone, and no special coordination is required. For those locations with the general management unit, the U.S. Forest Service concurred that the work can proceed under the Savings Provision of the Scenic Area act and no consistency review is required.

Project activities would take place near the Bonneville Dam locks. Ship passage through the locks would be maintained and BPA would coordinate construction activity including helicopter use with the lock operators during the project to ensure that project activities do not disrupt river traffic.

Long-term land use would not be changed by the project activities. There is no potential for significant impacts to land use or specially designated areas.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation:

The proposed work would not impact visual quality. All work would be conducted on existing high voltage transmission infrastructure. Replacing hardware and insulators and adding fall protection hardware to the steel-lattice transmission towers would not significantly alter the visual quality of the area.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation:

The project would create temporary dust and vehicle emission due to construction; however, no significant impacts would occur.

11. **Noise**



Explanation:

The project would create temporary noise due to construction; however, no significant impacts would occur.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation:

During project activity, all standard safety protocols would be followed. A safety plan would be developed and followed. Traffic flaggers would be employed near the Interstate 84 area as necessary to assist with construction activity. By implementing the proposed project, BPA would better preserve public safety by replacing aging infrastructure in need of repair.

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, if necessary: NA



Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary: NA



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, if necessary: NA



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, if necessary: NA

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: The proposed project is located on public land owned by the U.S. Forest Service and managed by the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. BPA would continue ongoing coordination with the landowners and land management agencies during project activities.

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

Signed: /s/ Aaron C. Siemers
Aaron C. Siemers
Environmental Scientist

Date: September 7, 2017