

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Tahkenitch-Reedsport Line Access Road Maintenance Project

Project No.: 423147

Project Manager: Clint Stanton, Access Road Engineer – TFLF-TPP-3

Location: Douglas County, Oregon

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

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to address three line impairments within the Tahkenitch-Reedsport line in Douglas County, OR. An impairment is an area where the distance from the conductor to the ground surface is inadequate, per National Electrical Safety Code (NESC) standards, resulting in a threat to line reliability and posing a risk to public health and safety. The proposed work is necessary to ensure ongoing safe and reliable operation of the transmission line, to maintain power delivery in the region, and to ensure the line meets current NESC and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) standards.

The proposed project includes the following proposed work:

Removal and redistribution of soil and/or rock material at three locations under the existing transmission lines (at 2/1, 2/5 and 3/2) using a combination of blasting and/or mechanical removal. Approximate volume of removal is estimated at 1,115 cubic yards (CY) and would impact less than 1 acre of vegetation.

The proposed action at each impairment site would include lowering of the ground surface to regulated standards by way of blasting and/or mechanical removal, followed by excavation if needed to ensure adequate transmission line conductor clearance between the transmission lines and the ground surface. All of the proposed work would occur within the existing, vegetated right-of-way corridor on steep forested/shrubby terrain. The impairment sites would be accessed using the existing BPA access roads network, though equipment and personnel may be required to traverse off road to access the proposed sites. All three impairments are on privately-owned land within the BPA right-of-way (ROW). Equipment used to perform this work may include a combination of the following: blasting material and equipment including noise-reducing blast mats, dump trucks, bulldozers, backhoes, excavators, and work trucks. All soil and rock material removed would be redistributed on the site. Because of the steep terrain, it is expected that most material would disperse downslope of the impairment sites and no mechanical redistribution would be required. After the impairments have been removed, all areas of bare soil would be covered with a natural fiber erosion control fabric such as jute or coir matting to provide site stabilization. In addition, all exposed soils would be hydroseeded using a Western Oregon native seed mix appropriate for the region based on recommendations from either the Oregon State University Agricultural Extension Office or as directed by the landowner.

This work is proposed to be conducted during the 2017-2018 construction season. If prior to, or during, construction activities from the proposed action may result in adverse impacts to resources that are not described within this categorical exclusion, coordination with the appropriate agencies and a reevaluation of effects may be warranted. No work in wetlands or waters would occur.

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/ John Wiley
John Wiley
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel
Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: November 21, 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.

Proposed Action: Tahkenitch-Reedsport Line Access Road Maintenance Project

Project Site Description

A site evaluation was conducted by Otak biologists on August 16, 2016, to evaluate site conditions and the surrounding environment. The proposed project is located near the City of Reedsport in Douglas County, OR. Land use within the project vicinity includes forested hillslopes, and commercial and residential properties. The approximate site elevation is between sea level and 150' elevation. The project is located in forested hillslopes consisting of dense stands of primarily second growth Douglas-fir and herbaceous-shrub communities within the immediate transmission line ROW. The proposed work occurs on privately held property within the BPA ROW.

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"/>

Explanation:

Archaeological inspections were conducted on March 28, 2017, by Heritage Research Associates, Inc. at the impairment correction locations. No prehistoric or demonstrably historical archaeological artifacts, features, or sites were identified in or near these four project locations. These project areas have low potential for surface or buried archaeological materials, based on the local topography. No additional archaeological investigations are recommended for these impairment corrections projects. In the event that archaeological or historical materials are discovered during project activities, work in the immediate vicinity would stop, the area would be secured, and the SHPO and the environmental project lead would be notified. Work would not commence until the SHPO has cleared the area.

2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Explanation:

The project includes removal of soil and/or rock under the transmission lines in three discreet areas identified as impairment sites for a total of 1,115 CY of removal of soil and rock. The soil is proposed to be dispersed on site in upland locations. Due to the steep slope in some locations, soil and rock material may disperse downslope of the impairment work and no mechanical dispersal may be required. No prime farmlands have been identified within the areas proposed for cut or fill. Therefore, the proposed action would have limited impacts to geology and soils.

3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Explanation:

Less than 1 acre of existing vegetation, primarily consisting of second-growth Douglas-fir and native upland shrubs and grass, is proposed for removal as a result of the project, primarily within the existing powerline

ROW. No special-status plant species or their habitats were documented to occur within the vicinity or were observed during the field survey due to lack of suitable habitat. Therefore, the proposed action would have no effect on special-status plant species. The project work would impact less than 1 acre of vegetation.

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



Explanation:

No suitable habitat for special-status wildlife species was found to occur within the project area. An official federally-listed species list was requested from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Information, Planning and Conservation database (IPaC) in August 2016 and again on September 27, 2017. Three special-status wildlife species were documented to occur or could potentially occur within 2 miles of the project (refer to the Endangered Species Act Letter of No Effect for this project for further details), including the marbled murrelet, northern spotted owl, and the western snowy plover. There is no suitable habitat for the marbled murrelet, northern spotted owl, or Western snowy plover within 2 miles of the project area. The marbled murrelet may fly over, or through, the project area during dispersal or foraging trips. As an additional BMP, the project would restrict all blasting activities to outside of the breeding season for the marbled murrelet, defined as occurring between April 1 and September 23; therefore, blasting activities would be restricted to September 24-March 31, and would be restricted to two hours after sunrise to two hours before sunset. The proposed project actions would occur within the existing powerline ROW and would impact less than 1 acre of sapling Douglas-fir trees, upland shrubs, and grasses as part of the impairment repairs. Any impacts to non-listed wildlife species would be limited to the immediate vegetation and soil removal sites. Therefore, the project would have no impacts to federally-listed wildlife and minimal impacts to non-listed wildlife species.

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



Explanation:

The project does not cross or otherwise impact wetlands or waterbodies. The work as proposed is exempt from Corps Section 404 and DSL permit applications as no impacts to wetlands or waters of the U.S. would occur. Therefore, the project would have no effect to waterbodies, floodplains, or fish.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation:

No wetlands are present in the project area. Work would be limited to upland environments. Therefore, the proposed action would have no impacts to wetlands.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation:

Groundwater and aquifers would not be impacted by the proposed project as the project does not include any groundwater withdraws or aquifer recharge areas. There would be no impacts to groundwater or aquifers.

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



Explanation:

No change in land use is proposed as part of the project. No specially designated areas were identified within the project limits. There would be no impacts to land use or specially designated areas.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation:

There are no residences within visual range of the work limits. There would be no impacts to visual resources.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: The proposed project is expected to produce some dust from blasting activities which is expected to be isolated and temporary in nature. Minor vehicle emissions during construction would be temporary in duration.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Noise generated from construction is expected to be temporary in nature. Blasting may be utilized to address impairments if subsurface soils or rocks cannot be removed by other equipment or if construction equipment cannot access the impairment site, such as on a steep hillslope. Blasting mats would be utilized to reduce noise associated with blasting. Blasting activities may occur intermittently during the construction window as determined by subsurface soil/rock conditions. Construction is expected to last approximately two to six weeks. The current level of road use is not expected to change, and no operational noise increases are expected.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation:

The project would develop a site-specific health and safety plan to address any hazards to protect personnel and any other persons that may be within the vicinity during the proposed work. The proposed work is necessary to ensure ongoing safe and reliable operation of the transmission line and to maintain power delivery in the region.

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:

- ☒ 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:

- ☒ 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:

- ☒ 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:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Land ownership within the project limits is privately and federally held. The Access Road Engineer would contact adjacent and potentially affected landowners prior to project construction.

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

Signed: /s/ John Wiley
John Wiley EP-4
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: November 21, 2017