

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Celilo Converter Station and Transmission Line Retirement

**PP&A Number:** 4,164

**Project Manager:** Karl Mitsch – TPOP-CSB-2, Mike Toomey – TELP-TPP-3

**Location:** Wasco County, Oregon

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B4.10 Removal of electric transmission lines and substations

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to remove the Big Eddy-Celilo No. 3 and No. 4 transmission lines that run between the Big Eddy Substation and the Celilo DC Converter Station. Additionally, a 500-kV DC “shoo-fly” line located south of the Celilo DC Converter Station; one building and substation equipment; and underground electrical and telecommunication cables would be removed from the Converter Station and Big Eddy Substation area. Removing the facilities is needed to prepare the Celilo Converter Station site for BPA’s Starr Facilities Upgrade Project as part of the Starr Complex. The Starr Complex covers approximately 525 acres and includes multiple transmission-related facilities, including switchyards, administrative and maintenance buildings, transmission lines, the converter station, and other buildings and structures.

Thirteen steel lattice structures including all conductor, insulators and hardware on the Big-Eddy-Celilo No. 3 and No.4 lines and the “shoo-fly” line would be removed. Six steel structures would be removed within the Converter Station yard. Structure footings would be cut 2 feet below grade with the foundations reburied and left in place. Approximately 3 acres of soil disturbance would occur during removal of the “shoo-fly” line and structures (about 100 ft. by 100 ft. disturbance at each structure).

A conductor pulling site would be located at approximately three angle structures to remove the conductor. Pulling sites use an area about 250 feet long by 100 feet wide ahead or back on line of a structure (about 2 acres total). Ground disturbance would occur from leveling and grading of the sites. Some road improvement would be needed on spurs to about five structures. Improvement would include grading and placing rock but no widening. Work would be conducted using dump trucks, excavators, drum compactors, and graders.

Equipment and facilities removed within the Celilo Converter Station would include valves and cooling equipment; bus work and structural supports; ground grids and foundations; and the Group 7/8 building and its foundation within the Converter 3 and 4 yards. Foundations would be broken off about 4 feet below ground and abandoned in place.

Five underground electrical and telecommunication cables would be removed in the area between Big Eddy Substation and the Celilo Converter Station using an excavator. The cables, about

5,400 feet each, run adjacent to one another; about 25 acres of soil would be disturbed during removal.

A material storage and equipment staging yard would be located in previously rocked areas near Big Eddy Substation or the Celilo Converter Station. The yard would accommodate equipment, used steel from structures, conductor, and other removed materials. All removed materials would be recycled or sold through BPA's Investment Recovery Center; materials not suitable would be disposed of offsite in a landfill or authorized waste disposal facility depending on the type of waste. Spoils and concrete debris would be kept on site and used as fill in the site development of the Starr Facilities Upgrade Project.

All work performed as part of this project would occur within previously disturbed areas that have been used for ongoing transmission line and substation operation.

**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/ Michelle Colletti*  
Michelle Colletti  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

*/s/ Katey Grange*      Date: *February 19, 2021*  
Katey C. Grange  
NEPA Compliance Officers

Attachment: 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: Celilo Converter Station and Transmission Line Retirement**

### **Project Site Description**

Celilo Converter Station and Big Eddy Substation are located on a topographic rise (about 600 feet in elevation) east of The Dalles and south of the Columbia River and The Dalles Dam on BPA land. Vegetation consists of grass and shrubs with some dryland farming fields to the east and west.

A drainage that may have seasonal flow, runs north between Big Eddy Substation and the converter station. A second drainage that may have seasonal flow, is located about 0.1 mile southwest of the “shoo-fly” lines (located south of the converter station).

Land use is primarily industrial with about 13 transmission lines crossing the open space area between Celilo Converter Station and Big Eddy Substation; A few residential areas are located to the north and west (Oregon Veterans Home is about 0.3 miles west) at lower elevations (about 400 to 440 feet) within The Dalles city limits. Both facilities are within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

### **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

#### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Consulting parties for this project include: Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), the Nez Perce Tribe, Confederate Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, and the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde. BPA determined that removal of the Big Eddy-Celilo No. 3 and No. 4 transmission lines would have an adverse effect on historic properties and entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with OR SHPO; the ACHP declined to participate on the grounds that they did not believe their participation was necessary. All project activities associated with the line removals would be done in accordance with the stipulations in the MOA.

The Converter Station and other facilities slated for removal were determined not eligible. The OR SHPO concurrence with a no adverse effect determination was received May 21, 2020.

The CTUIR has requested monitoring of all ground disturbing work in the project area.

Notes:

- Ensure cultural resource monitors are present during ground disturbing activities.
- Stop work and immediately notify the BPA Cultural Resource Lead, appropriate BPA project staff, interested Tribes, and Oregon SHPO in the event any archaeological material is encountered during project activities.

#### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Soil disturbance would occur at project sites.

Notes:

- Control dust during construction, using water trucks or other appropriate methods, as needed.
- Utilize appropriate erosion and sediment control best management practices for the protection of water resources.
- Develop a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan and implement erosion and sediment control best management practices.
- Reseed disturbed areas after construction activities are complete at the appropriate time period for germination with a locally-adapted, native seed mix approved by BPA environmental staff.
- Develop and implement a Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasures (SPCC) Plan in accordance with Federal, state, and local requirements. The plan would address fuel and chemical storage, spill containment and cleanup, construction contractor training, and proper spilled material disposal activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status species present. Grasses and shrubs (mostly non-native or invasive species) within the project area would be removed or disturbed. Disturbed areas would be reseeded.

Notes:

- Restrict construction activities to the area needed to work effectively. Construction crews would be instructed to restrict vehicles to designated areas and existing roads as much as possible.
- Designate specific equipment and material storage yards to avoid disturbance to vegetation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Northern spotted owl and Oregon spotted frog (both listed as threatened with designated critical habitat) may be present in Wasco County although no suitable habitat is present nor are there known occurrences within the project area; there would no effect on these species. Some wildlife may be present in the project area although they are likely habituated to noise and disturbance and would move out of the area during construction activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The underground electrical and telecommunication cables cross the drainage located between Big Eddy Substation and the converter station in two places. No floodplain or fish are present. Bull trout (listed as threatened with designated critical habitat) may be present in Wasco County; however because there would be no in-water work, there would no effect on bull trout. Implementation of the SWPPP and compliance with the NPDES permit would protect the drainage should flow be present.

### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: None present.

## 7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or use of groundwater proposed; maximum depth of disturbance would be about 4 feet. Spill prevention measures would be present on site.

## 8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Big-Eddy Substation and the Celilo Converter Station are within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. Because they are within the designated Urban Area planning boundary, work at the two facilities is excluded from the National Scenic Area consistency review requirements.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: While removal of the transmission and “shoo-fly” lines would eliminate man-made elements from the landscape, there likely would no difference in visual quality because many lines and structures would remain in the immediate area. Additionally, due to topography, it is likely that residents in The Dalles would not notice their removal. Removal of facilities and equipment within the converter station would likely not make a positive or negative impact to visual quality; the sites would still look industrial.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Dust and vehicle emissions would be generated during construction; use of water trucks or other appropriate measure would reduce impacts.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary construction noise during daylight hours. Limit heavy construction activities to daytime hours for noise abatement. Operational noise would not change.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impact to human health and safety is anticipated.

Notes:

- Stop work and notify the BPA Project Manager should contaminated media be unexpectedly encountered during construction of the project. Contaminated media include materials that are potentially harmful to the environment or human health and safety. Work will proceed only after measures are put in place to prevent the spread of contaminated materials and protect the health and safety of workers.
- Equip vehicles with fire suppression equipment, including a shovel, fire extinguisher, and bladder or water supply.

### **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: 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: 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:

**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: NA

### **Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Description: No notification - All work on BPA fee-owned property and no visual or other effects to adjacent landowners.

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

/s/ Michelle Colletti  
Michelle Colletti, EPR-4  
Physical Scientist

Date: February 19, 2021