

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** FY21 Pasco District Priority Pole Replacements

**Project No.:** 4670

**Project Manager:** Meadow Nelson

**Location:** Benton, Franklin and Walla Walla Counties, Washington and Union 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 replace deteriorating wood pole structures and associated structural/electrical components (e.g. cross arms, insulators, guy anchors, etc.) on 4 different transmission lines in the Pasco District.

See table below for structure names and locations on the transmission lines.

Transmission Line/ROW	Structure #	Township	Range	Section	County, State
Connell Tap to Benton – Scooteney #1	4/3	13N	31E	5	Franklin, WA
Franklin-Walla Walla #1	36/3	7N	35E	21	Walla Walla, WA
Benton-White Bluffs #1	1/12, 2/1, 2/2	11N	28E	14	Benton, WA
Roundup-La Grande #1	35/2	2S	36E	27	Union, OR

Replacement would be in-kind and would utilize the existing holes to minimize ground disturbance. If necessary, an auger would be used to remove any loose soil from the existing hole prior to new wood pole placement. Work areas would be about 50 feet by 50 feet at each of the structure replacement locations.

Access road maintenance would be limited to minor blading, grading, and rocking of access road segments that have become impassable. All road maintenance would take place in the existing road prism.

Structures being replaced are in easements on privately-owned property, Department of Energy – Hanford, and National Forest lands (Wallowa-Whitman National Forest). These structures are located within or adjacent to pastures, forest lands, scablands, or similar type land uses.

The proposed action would allow safe and timely access to the transmission line, which would help reduce outage times and maintain reliable power in the region. All work would be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA standards.

**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/ Shawn Barndt*  
Shawn L. Barndt  
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

*/s/ Sarah T. Biegel*                      Date: June 8, 2021  
Sarah T. Biegel  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

cc: (w/ enclosures)  
T. Cossairt – TFPF-Tri Cities RMHQ

## 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:** FY21 Pasco District Priority Pole Replacements.

### Project Site Description

See table below for structure names and locations on the transmission lines.

Transmission Line/ROW	Structure #	Township	Range	Section	County, State
Connell Tap to Benton – Scooteney #1	4/3	13N	31E	5	Franklin, WA
Franklin-Walla Walla #1	36/3	7N	35E	21	Walla Walla, WA
Benton-White Bluffs #1	1/12, 2/1, 2/2	11N	28E	14	Benton, WA
Roundup-La Grande #1	35/2	2S	36E	27	Union, OR

Structures being replaced are in easements on privately-owned property, Department of Energy – Hanford, and National Forest lands (Walla Walla-Whitman National Forest). These structures are located within or adjacent to pastures, forest lands, scablands, or similar type land uses.

### Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

#### 1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

#### Explanation:

Connell Tap to Benton-Scooteney, Franklin-Walla Walla, and Benton-White Bluffs: Section 106 initiation occurred on January 20, 2021. The survey was conducted on February 24-25, 2021. The DOE letter and report were sent out on March 18, 2021. The CTUIR, Nez Perce, DOE-RL, DAHP, and Wanapum and Yakama Tribes were consulted, but did not respond during the 30-day period.

Roundup-La Grande: The survey was conducted by the USFS on April 19, 2021, under the Terms of the Programmatic Agreement Among the USFS R6, ACHP, and SHPO Dated June 2004. The USFS letter to the CTUIR and report were sent out on April 29, 2021. The CTUIR did not respond during the 30-day period.

- In the event that archaeological or historic materials are discovered during project activities, work in the immediate vicinity must stop, the area would be secured, and OR SHPO/DAHP and the environmental project lead must be notified.
- Crews and equipment are to use existing access roads to and from each work site.

- Limit access road maintenance to the existing road prism.

There are no previously recorded cultural resources around the structures that could be affected by the project. It has therefore been determined that this action would not impact cultural resources. BPA has determined that this undertaking has No Potential to Effect Historic Properties.

## **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Localized soil disturbance would occur during wood pole replacement. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized as necessary.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minimal disturbance to vegetation is anticipated. There would be no effect to ESA-listed plant species. No impacts to state or federally sensitive species are anticipated. Project activities would be limited to the already impacted access road right-of-way and would not substantially alter existing plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In general, the project would have a small impact to wildlife and habitat related to temporary disturbance associated with elevated equipment noise and human presence. The project would have no impacts to state or federally-listed sensitive species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is not located within a floodplain and there are no nearby water bodies that support resident, anadromous, or ESA-listed fish. Erosion control best management practices would be used to ensure sedimentation into any water body does not occur.

## **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are within the project area.

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No use of groundwater proposed. Maximum depth of disturbance would be about 12 feet below ground surface.

## 8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use. No specially-designated areas.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be performed within existing transmission line right-of-way. Replacement of the wood pole and associated components would be in kind and replaced in the same location.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have a temporary impact on air quality from a small amount of vehicle emissions and dust generated during construction.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be temporary construction noise. Operational noise of the transmission line would not change.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would allow safe and timely access to the transmission line which would help reduce outage times and maintain reliable power 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: N/A

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

Explanation: N/A

**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: N/A

**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: N/A

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

Description: BPA Realty personnel, the environmental specialist and archaeologist have coordinated the proposed project activities with the landowner or land manager (DOE-Hanford personnel, Hanford Tribal Working Group and USFS) prior to project initiation, and any concerns regarding proposed transmission line maintenance activities have been addressed.

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

Signed: /s/ Shawn Barndt  
Shawn L. Barndt  
Tri Cities RMHQ

Date: June 8, 2021