Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: Ellensburg-Moxee No. 1 Structure 3/10 Replacement

Project Manager: Gerri A. Colburn, TEPF-CSB-2

Location: Kittitas County, Washington

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

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to remove structure 3/10 and to replace structures 3/9 and 4/1 on the 115-kilovolt (kV) Ellensburg-Moxee No. 1 transmission line near Ellensburg, Kittitas County, Washington (Township 17 North, Range 18 East, Sections 11 and 14). Structure 3/10 is located less than 20 feet southeast of the Yakima River, and the structure is at risk of failure due to river bank erosion. In order to ensure continued reliable electrical transmission and fiber optic communications, BPA would replace structures 3/9 and 4/1 with taller structures, which would allow for the removal of structure 3/10 entirely. BPA may pursue a longer-term solution for the river crossing location in the future, which would undergo additional environmental review when proposed.

The following specific actions are proposed:

- Replace the existing structure 3/9 (a 65-foot-tall wooden three-pole deadend) with an approximately 84-foot-tall wooden three-pole deadend structure. Installation of the new poles would require excavating three new holes approximately 11 feet deep. Existing guy wire anchors would be cut off approximately one to two feet below grade and retired in place, and six new plate anchors and associated guy wires would be installed. Installation of each new plate anchor would require excavating an area approximately 10 feet by 10 feet and up to 10 feet deep.

- Remove the existing structure 3/10 (a 65-foot-tall wooden two-pole H-frame). The resulting holes would be backfilled with imported gravel.

- Replace the existing structure 4/1 (a 65-foot-tall wooden two-pole H-frame) with an approximately 94-foot-tall wooden two-pole H-frame structure. Installation of the new poles would require excavating two new holes approximately 11 feet deep.

- Position fiber optic cable pulling and tensioning equipment at structures 3/8 and 4/3. New fiber optic cable would be pulled through the existing structures and spliced into the existing cabling. At structure 3/8, two new guy wires and associated plate anchors could be installed to deadend the new fiber optic cable, if it is required for structural integrity. Installation of each new plate anchor would require excavating an area approximately 10 feet by 10 feet and up to 10 feet deep.

- Access structure 4/2 to hang and clip newly strung fiber optic cable.
- Replace jumpers, insulators, cross-arms, and other associated electrical and structural components, if required.

The proposed action would require the use of light-duty vehicles, heavy equipment (i.e., flatbed truck, backhoe, boom truck, and bucket truck), fiber optic cable pulling and tensioning equipment, and power tools. Excavated soils would be temporarily stored on-site and then used for backfill or placed around the base of the poles. Heavy equipment would either be operated on the existing gravel access roads and landings or on temporary wetland mats, and no new access roads or landings would be required. Construction would require no more than one week to complete and is scheduled for late February 2022.

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/ W. Walker Stinnette
W. Walker Stinnette
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Carol P. Leiter
Carol P. Leiter
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange *February 16, 2022*
Katey C. Grange Date
NEPA Compliance Officer

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: Ellensburg-Moxee No. 1 Structure 3/10 Replacement

Project Site Description

The project site is located entirely within BPA's existing Ellensburg-Moxee No. 1 transmission line right-of-way (ROW) easement near Ellensburg, Kittitas County, Washington (Township 17 North, Range 18 East, Sections 11 and 14). Work would occur from structure 4/3 to structure 3/8, with ground disturbance occurring at structures 4/1, 3/10, and 3/9 as well as at structure 3/8, if required. The Yakima River flows through the ROW between structures 3/10 and 3/9. Most of the project site is located within the River's floodplain, and wetlands are known to be present in close proximity to structures 4/1, 3/10, and 3/9. Northeast of the Yakima River, structures 3/8 and 3/9 are located on undeveloped property that has recently undergone habitat restoration and is currently administered by U.S. Bureau of Reclamation. The remaining work areas around structures 4/3, 4/2, 4/1, and 3/10 are southwest of the River on private property that is currently used for grazing cattle. The majority of the work areas consist of existing gravel access roads and landing pads, interspersed with some low-growing grasses and weeds. Outside of the ROW, the surrounding area is primarily characterized by rural residential and agricultural land uses.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On February 3, 2022, BPA initiated an expedited National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 consultation after determining that the proposed undertaking constitutes an "Emergency Situation" under 36 CFR 800.12. BPA consulted with the following parties:

- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
- U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
- Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP)

BPA conducted background research and an intensive field survey of the Area of Potential Effects (APE). No previously recorded archaeological resources were located within the APE, and no new archaeological resources were identified during the archaeological field survey. The Ellensburg-Moxee No. 1 transmission line is considered eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. However, the proposed undertaking would neither alter the integrity of the transmission line, nor diminish any of the standards under which it is considered eligible.

Therefore, BPA determined on February 11, 2022, that the proposed undertaking would result in No Adverse Effect to Historic Properties (BPA CR Project No.: WA 2020 005; DAHP Log No.: 2022-02-0073-BPA). On February 11, 2022, DAHP and the Yakama Nation concurred with BPA's determination. On February 15, 2022, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation concurred with BPA's determination.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA would require that work be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground disturbance would include excavation to remove and install transmission structures and associated guy wires and minor soil compaction from vehicle and equipment use. To minimize rutting, vehicles and heavy equipment would either be operated on the exiting gravel access roads and landings or on temporary wetland mats. Standard construction best management practices (BMPs) would prevent soil erosion and sedimentation. The site would be reseeded following completion of construction and would eventually return to pre-existing conditions.

Notes:

- Cut off existing guy wire anchors 1 to 2 feet below grade and retire the remaining in-ground portions of the anchors in place.
- Limit the operation of vehicles and heavy equipment to the existing gravel access roads and landing pads and deploy temporary wetland mats in areas where operation of vehicles and heavy equipment would lead to rutting.
- Implement Erosion and Sediment Control (ESC) BMPs in accordance with the Washington Department of Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Eastern Washington.
- Disturbed areas would be re-contoured, stabilized, and/or revegetated with native, regionally-appropriate seed mix(es) approved by the landowner/manager.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would temporarily remove, crush, or cover some low-growing grasses and weeds where present within existing gravel access roads and landing pads and around the bases of transmission structures. Temporarily disturbed areas would be reseeded following completion of construction. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status plant species near the project site, the proposed action would not impact any suitable special-status species habitat, if present.

Notes:

- Ensure vehicles and equipment are cleaned prior to the start of construction to minimize the introduction and spread of weeds. Clean vehicles and equipment as soon as possible after completion of the project.
- Ensure that imported gravel fill is obtained from weed-free sources.
- Reseed disturbed areas with native, regionally-appropriate seed mix(es) approved by the landowner/manager.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary disruption of normal wildlife behavior could occur from elevated noise and human presence during construction. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status wildlife species near the project site, and the proposed action would not impact any suitable special-status species habitat, if present.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Portions of the project site, including structures 3/10, 4/1, 4/2, and 4/3, are situated within the floodplain of the Yakima River, which is located less than 20 feet from structure 3/10. The Yakima River supports two fish species protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act: bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) and mid-Columbia steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). No in-water work or riparian tree or shrub removal is proposed and standard construction best management practices would prevent indirect impacts to water bodies, floodplains, and fish. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies and floodplains and would have no effect on fish species or habitats.

Notes:

- Stage new transmission structure poles on cribbing off the ground.
- Maintain an oil/fuel spill kit on-site during construction to address containment, cleanup, and disposal in the event of a spill.
- Implement ESC BMPs in accordance with the Washington Department of Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Eastern Washington.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Portions of the project site are located in close proximity to wetlands associated with the Yakima River. BPA would restrict construction activities to the minimum area needed to safely complete the proposed action, and would deploy temporary wetland matting to avoid rutting from the operation of vehicles and heavy equipment. Total ground disturbance within a wetland would not exceed 0.1 acres. Standard construction best management practices would prevent indirect impacts to off-site wetlands.

Notes:

- See Section 5 Notes.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground excavation could reach a depth that would intersect groundwater. Standard construction BMPs would reduce the potential for hazardous materials to contaminate groundwater or aquifers, and no new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers are proposed. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

Notes:

- See Section 5 Notes

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action could temporarily (no more than one week) impact livestock grazing due to construction noise, access restrictions, and ground disturbance. BPA has been in coordination with the underlying landowners. There would be no permanent change in land use, and the project site is not located in a specially-designated area.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would cause a perceptible change in the appearance of the project site. During construction, the presence of construction equipment and general construction activities, including temporary soil and vegetation disturbance, would cause temporary visual impacts. Permanent visual changes would include removing structure 3/10 and replacing structures 3/9 and 4/1 with new structures that would be approximately 30 to 40 feet taller. However, the project site is not located in a visually-sensitive area, and changes would be temporary and/or consistent with the existing visual quality of the transmission line ROW.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During construction, use of vehicles and equipment would result in a minor and temporary increase in emissions in the local area. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the proposed action.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During construction, use of vehicles and equipment and general construction activities would create noise above current ambient conditions, which could be audible from private residences located near the project site. Noise impacts would be temporary (no more than one week) and intermittent and would only occur during typical working hours (approximately 7 AM to 7 PM), and there would be no long-term change in ambient noise following completion of the project.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would be completed by transmission line maintenance professionals trained in proper techniques and equipment use. The project would not generate or use hazardous materials and would not create conditions that would increase risk to human health and safety. Therefore, no impacts to human health and safety are expected as a result of the proposed action.

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: The proposed action would occur entirely within BPA's existing transmission line easement, and BPA has been coordinating with the underlying landowners. No other landowner notification, involvement, or coordination would be required.

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

Signed: */s/ W. Walker Stinnette* *February 16, 2022*

W. Walker Stinnette, EC-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC