

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: American Forest Management Company use of North Bonneville - Midway No. 1 Access Roads

Project No.: 20200369

Project Manager: Ryan Tanner – TERR-3

Location: Skamania County, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow American Forest Management (AFM) Company the temporary use of the current access road routes located on the BPA fee-owned North Bonneville - Midway No 1 230kVA transmission line right-of-way (ROW) from operating mile 18 tower 4 to mile 19 tower 2. AFM would utilize the BPA road network to transport timber harvested from their adjacent parcels to the north and south of the transmission line corridor. AFM would use the BPA roads prior to March 1, 2024.

Additionally, AFM would improve the surface condition of the existing road prisms to support the increased vehicle and equipment traffic on three access road sections. AFM proposes to improve the current access road prism by adding approximately 24 inches of new gravel over the existing access road surfaces within the BPA fee-owned ROW. AFM would add gravel to approximately 510 linear feet of existing roadway west of structures 18/7, approximately 410 linear feet of east of structures 19/1, and approximately 350 linear feet west of structures 19/2. Light grading would occur to level out the new gravel. Equipment used would be dump trucks, a small bulldozer or road grader, logging transport trucks and pickup trucks.

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/ Nicholas W. Johnson

Nicholas W. Johnson
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange	Date
NEPA Compliance Officer	

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: American Forest Management Company use of North Bonneville - Midway No. 1 Access Roads

Project Site Description

The project is located in Skamania County, 8 miles northwest of Stevenson, Washington within Section 21, Township 3 North, Range 9 East. The existing access road connects the North Bonneville - Midway No 1. 230kVA corridor and the county road Bunker Keys. The project is bordered by public lands managed by the US Forest Service to the west and is located approximately 0.5 mile north of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. AFM owns the parcels to the north, east and south of the project area. The project area is surrounded by undeveloped timber stands that have been previously logged within the past 50 -75 years. The topography of the project area varies between 5 to 30 percent slopes.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA Archaeologist made a No Historic Properties Affected determination and sent to the Washington State Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation (DAHP), Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, and the Nez Perce Tribe on December 12, 2023. DAHP concurred on December 15, 2023. No other responses were received within 30 days.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be some ground disturbance associated with road resurfacing of existing roads. Work would be focused on the existing road prism, no new road routes or widening would occur.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No listed plant species or habitats occur in the project location. Gravel would be sourced from a weed free facility.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project could briefly impact local wildlife during the two-day construction window, and intermittently during logging transport over a two-week period. The project area is adjacent to the designated Critical Habitat for Northern Spotted Owl located 500 feet to the east and north of the project area. There are no known Northern Owl nesting sites within 0.5 mile of the project area. The proposed improvement actions and access road use timeline would not affect the Northern Spotted Owl. No other special-status species or designated habitat is present within the project area.

Notes:

- Road construction and logging transport would occur outside the Northern Spotted Owl critical nesting period of March 15-September 30.
- If crews are delayed access due to inclement weather, they would resume logging activities on October 1, 2024.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No water bodies, floodplains, or fish present within or nearby to the project area. There would be no impact to these resources as a result of this project.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No known wetlands are present within the vicinity of the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground disturbance would be limited to surface grading and would not impact groundwater resources.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project does not change the main current use of the high voltage power line right-of-way.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project is located within the existing transmission right-of-way corridor. The proposed use would not alter the visual aspect of the corridor.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small amount of dust and emissions from equipment and vehicles would occur during construction activities. This would occur within a relatively short duration.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No sustained noise impacts would occur. Intermittent noise is associated with the construction activities for road improvements and brief vehicle noise when traveling the road post-completion.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed project actions do not adversely impact human health and safety. Construction activities would follow applicable health and safety standards.

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 reality would coordinate any notifications to nearby landowners. No other 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/ Nicholas W. Johnson

Nicholas W. Johnson

Environmental Protection Specialist

01/29/2024

Date