

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: North Bend FY21 Priority Pole Replacement and Access Road Repair Project
(Update to previous CX issued on July 3, 2024)

PP&A No.: 5034

Project Manager: Jeffery Hurt - TEPL-CSB-2

Location: Coos and Douglas counties, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance; B1.13 Pathways, short access roads, and rail lines

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is proposing to replace 5 deteriorating wood pole structures and associated hardware and guy wires on the Reedsport – Fairview No. 1 transmission lines. The proposed project would include the following work elements:

- Replacement of 5 wood pole transmission structures (in-kind) on the Reedsport -Fairview No.1 transmission line, structures 1/4, 14/5, 24/4, 28/5, and 30/3
- Improvement of about 2 miles of existing access roads (re-shape subgrade, re-grade surface, and place rock)
- Construct/improve 4 equipment landings up to (70 feet x 100 feet)

If needed, additional project work may include: grading and shaping of existing equipment landings and roads, installation of geotextile material, placement of crushed rock, compacting road surface, and maintenance of gates and drainage features. Material removed from landing sites would be disposed of at an approved off-site disposal facility.

The work would occur in the winter of 2025 through the fall 2025 and would be done using conventional utility line and construction equipment and techniques. This CX has been updated to reflect changes in project design, such as the size of equipment landings and material disposal.

The Federal Columbia River Transmission System Act directs BPA to construct improvements, additions, and replacements to its transmission system that are necessary to maintain electrical stability and reliability, as well as to provide service to BPA's customers (16 United States Code [U.S.C.] § 838b(b-d)).

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.¹

/s/ Steven Selser
Steven Selser
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange
Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer Date: February 21, 2025

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

¹ BPA is aware of the November 12, 2024, decision in *Marin Audubon Society v. Federal Aviation Administration*, No. 23-1067 (D.C. Cir. Nov. 12, 2024). To the extent that a court may conclude that the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA are not judicially enforceable or binding on this agency action, BPA has nonetheless elected to follow those regulations at 40 Code Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) §§ 1500– 1508, in addition to the US Department of Energy's NEPA implementing procedures at 10 C.F.R. Part § 1021, to meet the agency's obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 *et seq.*

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.

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Project Site Description

The proposed project will be located in Douglas and Coos counties, Oregon. All work locations are in upland areas between the Oregon Coast Mountain Range and the Pacific Ocean. Structure 1/4 is in a parking lot in the city of Reedsport along a frontage road adjacent to Hwy 101 and local businesses. Structure 14/5 and access road is located on private land used for cattle grazing. Structures 24/4, 28/5, and 30/3 are within BPA's ROW surrounded by privately held timber land. Access roads to these structures pass through privately held agricultural and timberland.

Table 1. Township, Range, Section Number, and County Information

Transmission Line	TLM District	Structure	Township, Range, Section	OR Counties
Reedsport-Fairview No. 1	North Bend	1/4	T22S, R12W, SEC4	Douglas
	North Bend	14/5	T24S R13W SEC1	Coos
	North Bend	24/4	T25S R12W SEC29	Coos
	North Bend	28/5	T26S R12W SEC7	Coos
	North Bend	30/3	T26S R12W SEC18	Coos

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua & Siuslaw Indians, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz, Coquille Indian Tribe, United States Forest Service - Siuslaw National Forest, on March 29, 2024. BPA did not receive any responses. BPA sent a no adverse effect to historic resources determination on May 31, 2024, and OR SHPO concurred on June 27, 2024. No additional response was received within 30 days.

2. Geology and Soils

No with conditions

Explanation: All wood pole replacements would be in-kind and be placed in the same location as the existing poles. Minor auguring of the existing holes may be necessary. The proposed roadway improvements would reduce erosion and degradation of the existing access roads. All disturbed soils outside of the road prism would be seeded with a native seed mix appropriate for the region, and mulched, to further stabilize soils. No prime or unique farmlands would be affected. Therefore, the proposed action would have limited temporary impacts to geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: Other than Reedsport – Fairview No.1 structure 1/4, located in the City of Reedsport, all project activities would take place in upland areas within maintained transmission rights-of-way and access roads. These project areas exhibit considerably different vegetation than the surrounding dense forest vegetation and lack suitable habitat characteristics for sensitive plant species found in this region, which tend to favor lowlands and wetlands. Thus, it is unlikely that Federal or State special-status plant species would occur within project areas. All disturbed soils would be seeded with a native seed mix appropriate for the region, and then mulched, immediately following construction. Therefore, the proposed action would not affect special-status plant species.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: Ground disturbance would be limited to within the existing landings, road surface and immediately adjacent drainage ditches. A species list for the project location was acquired from USFWS on 15 May, 2024 and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's sensitive species list was reviewed. No Threatened or Endangered or special status wildlife species or their habitat would be affected by the actions. Temporary wildlife disturbance from noise would occur during maintenance activities.

No documented State of Oregon special-status species or habitats are present in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no floodplains present within the proposed work area. Oregon Coast coho salmon are present in the general project area; however, the proposed project activities are in upland areas at least 250 feet from any permanent and seasonal waterways. No impacts to water, floodplains, or fish are expected to result from the proposed project.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: Project areas are located in uplands and project activities do not have the potential to impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No excavation would occur at depths that would intersect groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use is proposed as part of the project. No specially-designated areas were identified within the project limits. The project would not result in changes or impacts to land use or specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not alter visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Exhaust and dust from utility equipment may temporarily reduce air quality in the immediate project area.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours. Work on REED-FAVW-1 1/4 is adjacent to businesses and Hwy 101 and should not disturb local residences.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA personnel would develop a site-specific health and safety plan to address any hazards during the proposed work, including public safety within city limits that establishes an exclusion zone around the work area. 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: 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 transmission line maintenance foreman, access road engineers, environmental representatives, and realty representatives have discussed proposed project activities with the landowners and would continue to coordinate activities with the landowners through construction and into post-construction revegetation monitoring.

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

Signed: /s/ Steven Selser

Steven D. Selser
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: February 21, 2025