

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Vantage-Hanford Goat Peaks Replacement

PP&A No.: 7117

Project Manager: Brent Thompson – TFWF-Schultz

Location: Grant County, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance; B3.2 Aviation Activities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to complete urgent maintenance on the Vantage-Hanford No. 1 transmission line. The work would include replacement of goat peak steel lattice transmission structure components on 6 structures across approximately 2 transmission line miles. The work would be done using helicopters to transport workers between landing zones and the work areas using the human external cargo method. This entails the helicopter transporting line-workers from the landing zone to the structures where they will remove the goat peak portions of the structure and replace with new material. Three helicopter landing zones would be used to perform the work as well as the use of a fueling vehicle at the landing zones.

Vantage-Hanford-1 structures, 16/1, 16/2, 16/4, 17/1, 18/2

The Federal Columbia River Transmission System Act directs BPA to construct, acquire, operate, maintain, repair, relocate, and replace the transmission system, including facilities and structures appurtenant thereto. (16 United States Code [U.S.C] § 838i(b)). The Administrator is further charged with maintaining electrical stability and reliability, selling transmission and interconnection services, and providing service to BPA's customers. (16 U.S.C § 838b(b-d)). The Administrator is also authorized to conduct electrical research, development, experimentation, tests, and investigation related to construction, operation, and maintenance of transmission systems and facilities. (16 U.S.C § 838i(b)(3)).

Findings: In accordance with Section 1021.102 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; 89 FR 34074, April 30, 2024; 90 FR 29676, July 3, 2025, Interim Final Rule) and the current *DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Procedures*, BPA has determined the following:

- 1) The proposed action fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021;
- 2) The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion; and

- 3) There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal (see attached Environmental Evaluation).

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

/s/ Justin Carr
Justin Carr
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel
Sarah T. Biegel Date: May 26, 2026
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Evaluation

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Evaluation

This evaluation 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: Vantage-Hanford Goat Peaks Replacement

Project Site Description

The proposed action is located in Grant County, Washington. The proposed action would occur within and adjacent to BPA's right-of-way (ROW) as well as three identified helicopter landing zones nearby the ROW.

The ROW in the project area measures approximately 185 feet in width. Elevations of the structures in the proposed project area are approximately 760 feet above sea level. The transmission line ROW lies within private agricultural lands. Landing zone 2 lies within Bureau of Reclamation property used for irrigation canal operation.

Three helicopter landing zones would be used:

Landing zone locations: LZ1 – 46.7440°N, 119.7175°W
 LZ2 – 46.7290°N, 119.6943°W
 LZ3 – 46.7289°N, 119.6849°W

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA sent consultation on April 14, 2026, that detailed the proposed project and determined that the project would result in no adverse effect to historic properties. Consulting parties included the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation and the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). On May 14, 2026, the 30-day response period ended. No other comments were received from consulting parties.

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 and in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties. Please provide the project sponsor with a copy of BPA's Post-Review Discovery Protocol. Should there be a change to the project design that would expand the project footprint, please contact me to determine if further review is necessary under Section 106. Additional consultation and field inventory may be necessary to address certain design changes.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities are not expected to result in soil disturbance.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some vegetation may be crushed in landing zones or where equipment would be staged temporarily. There are no federally-listed or state sensitive plant species or habitats known to occur in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In general, the proposed project activities would have minimal and very temporary disturbance to wildlife associated with elevated noise and human presence. Project activities would be minimally invasive and extremely temporary; therefore, BPA has determined that the proposed project would have “no effect” on the proposed threatened species monarch butterfly and Suckley’s cuckoo bumble bee. Yellow-billed cuckoo has not been sighted in Washington state since 1996 and there is no suitable habitat for this species within the project area; therefore, BPA has determined the proposed project activities would have “no effect” on yellow-billed cuckoo. Transmission Line Maintenance has conducted visual surveys of the line and has not identified MBTA species nesting on transmission towers, or surrounding the areas where work is to be conducted. The project area is over 15 miles from known active burrowing owl sites on the Hanford Reserve, 20 miles from the closest known active ferruginous hawk nest. There are 26 raptor species found in the Hanford National Reserve, which include Swainson’s hawk, ferruginous hawk, peregrine falcon, and the bald eagle. The project area is also home to great blue herons, or other wading birds such as egrets, black-crowned night herons, or cormorants. They typically nest in tall groves of trees along the Columbia River. No work would be done within these ideal habitat locations, and no tree removal would occur. There is also the potential presence of golden eagle, long-eared owl, and northern harrier. For the reasons stated above, the actions of the project would have discountable effects on federally protected species under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: There would be no ground disturbing activities in any stream or other waterbody in the proposed project area, and no riparian vegetation would be impacted. The project would have no effect to ESA-listed fish species (i.e., bull trout) or any waterbodies.

Notes: The following conservation measures would be implemented during this project:

- Helicopter landing zones would be the only areas where fueling would occur in the project area. Standard BMPs would be implemented during fueling operations and include:
 - Fueling would not occur within 150 feet of a water resource or conveyance (e.g., a lake, pond, river, stream, wetland, canal, ditch, etc.).
 - When possible, fueling would occur on a flat and impermeable surface.
 - Spill management and fire suppression equipment would be immediately available.
 - Fueling would only be conducted by trained and qualified personnel in accordance with governing laws, regulations, policies, and procedures.
 - Workers performing fueling would receive training in proper fueling operations and spill response.
 - Fueling equipment would have a kill switch that can immediately stop the fueling operation.
 - The flow rate of fueling equipment would not exceed 10 gallons per minute.

- While fueling, the operator would cup an absorbent pad under the nozzle and wait 30 seconds after fueling has stopped to allow all fuel to leave the nozzle. When returning from the helicopter to the fueling truck, the operator would hold the cupped nozzle upwards.
- Should any fuel be spilled, the soil would be excavated and placed in a plastic bag or container for proper handling and disposal.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetland areas have been identified in the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Refueling activities have the potential to impact groundwater or aquifers, but this would be unlikely given the minimization measures that would be employed.

Notes: The measures described above for #5 would minimize the potential for the proposed project to impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use would occur and project activities would not impact existing land uses; however, there may be temporary auditory disruptions less than eight hours in length per day for approximately 5 days.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project activities would not change the current visual aesthetics.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would utilize conventional equipment powered by petroleum fuels. Exhaust would temporarily impact air quality in the immediate vicinity while the equipment is in operation. Additionally, dust may be created by helicopter operations. Dust creation would be isolated to small areas and in short duration. Water may be used for dust suppression in some areas. Baseline air quality conditions are expected to return shortly after project activities cease.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have noise associated with use of a small helicopter. During project activities, work would take place during daylight hours, for approximately eight hours per day. The project would be relatively short in duration – no more than one day at a single transmission line span. The operational noise of the transmission line would not change.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project area occurs away from any major population centers and the work would be temporary and minimally invasive.

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 staff have coordinated the proposed project activities with private landowners. The Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) was notified of the proposed activities on March 19, 2026. USBR will issue a right of entry upon completion of the environmental analysis by the lead action agency.

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

Signed: */s/ Justin Carr*

Justin Carr

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: *May 26, 2026*