

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Renewed Land Rights Acquisition in Klickitat County, WA.

Project No.: TER ID 17-0089

Project Manager: K. Jackson – TERP-TPP-4

Location: Klickitat County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.24 Property Transfers

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to acquire a total of about 3 miles of land rights for segments of existing transmission line and related access roads in the Wautoma-Rock Creek No. 1 (Wautoma) corridor, and about 0.5 mile of transmission line rights in the Big Eddy-Spring Creek No. 1 and Big Eddy-Chenoweth No. 2 (Big Eddy) corridors. Rights to the land tracts underlying the BPA facilities and roads have recently expired or will soon expire. BPA seeks to replace in kind those rights held for the previous 50-year terms: the right to construct, operate, maintain, and patrol access roads (four total land tracts), and to operate, maintain and patrol transmission line facilities (ten total land tracts) in the rights-of-way concerned. BPA would propose 50-year terms for renewal but may be granted less than that. The BPA tracts are:

<u>Wautoma group:</u>	<u>Big Eddy group:</u>
BE-MI-39-A-95SIA	BE-C-3-A-2XW1
H-JD-72-A-267	BE-MI-3-A-7R1XW1
H-JD-73-A-268	BE-MI-3-A-8R1
H-JD-74-A-271	
H-JD-75-A-272	
H-JD-75-A-274	
H-JD-75-A-275	
H-JD-75-AR-1P2	
H-JD-73-AR-1	
H-JD-74-AR-1P2	
H-JD-74-AR-2	

The tract groups are separated by at least 35 miles with the Big Eddy group located near Dallesport, WA by the Columbia River, and the Wautoma group to its northeast. The tracts are all within Klickitat County, WA and the underlying land owners include the Yakama Indian Nation of Confederated Tribes and Bands (Yakama Nation) and various individual Yakama Nation allotment holders, and the US Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The two BLM tracts, BE-MI-39-A-95SIA and H-JD-75-A-272, were or are being transferred to the BLM from Yakama Nation. The line in the Wautoma corridor is a 500kV line with lattice-steel four-legged towers. The Big Eddy-Chenoweth No. 2 is a 230kV with wood H-frame towers in the tracts concerned while the Big Eddy-Spring Creek No. 1 is a lattice steel H-frame 230kV line. The access roads are in the Wautoma corridor and are two-tracks accessed from the paved County-owned Bickleton Highway. BPA needs to maintain access along these to reach the transmission line for operation and maintenance activities.

The acquisition process for the land owned by the Yakama Nation and allotment holders would follow the current Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) Title 25, Part 169, Right-Of-Way Over Indian Land, Subpart C and D, and requires BPA to perform a Record of Survey conducted by a Certified Federal Surveyor (CFedS) licensed within the subject state. In order to conduct the Record of Survey (the cadastral survey, or just "survey"), BPA would locate survey monuments in addition to doing centerline, edge of right-of-way, and access road surveys. New survey monuments may be installed in the ground as needed and could be needed outside of BPA rights of way to re-establish Public Land Survey System (PLSS) section corners. The survey elements are the only actions that may require some ground and vegetation disturbance. Appraisals would be carried out as well but would not be expected to require leaving the boundaries of BPA's rights-of-way.

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, July 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/ Michael J. O'Connell

Michael J. O'Connell
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason

Stacy L. Mason
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: February 28, 2019

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: Renewed Land Rights Acquisition in Klickitat County, WA

Project Site Description

The transmission line and access roads are located in the Columbia plateau of South-Central Washington. The Wautoma tracts are in a border region between high desert and dry upland conifer forest with a small hardwood component. The lands underlying the rights-of-way may sustain grazing and are mainly covered with herbaceous plants interspersed with some low woody plants. The nearest perennial stream is Quartz Creek about one mile to the west. The Big Eddy tracts are located in scoured low-land basalt between Dallesport, WA and Horsethief Lake State Park. There are raised vernal pools outside the transmission corridors.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The BPA archeologist has determined that the action does not have the potential to affect historic properties or cultural resources. Survey crews are instructed to avoid any standing stone features, and to not create such features as a means to keep a survey marker erect. A BPA archaeologist would conduct a desktop review of any new proposed monument locations to confirm they do not fall within a cultural resource site. No impacts to cultural resources are expected with these controls in place.</p>		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> There could be monuments inserted into soils but these would have small footprints. The disturbance would be very limited in nature. Holes, up to 3-feet in diameter and about 30 inches deep, would be hand-dug and concrete may be used to secure posts. Typically, the evidence visible at the surface would consist of a few-inch-diameter metallic plate printed with survey information.</p>		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Small amounts of vegetation may be trampled during survey and appraisal work. There is the potential for encountering several state-listed plant species but there would be no impact to their populations with the following controls:</p> <p><u>Mitigations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ In the Big Eddy group, avoid working in wet areas and wetlands to the maximum extent practicable.✓ All sites: keep vehicles on defined access roads and two-tracks.		

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

Explanation: The federal species of concern, the western gray squirrel, is found in the vicinity of the project locations of the Wautoma group. Western gray squirrels prefer nesting in tree canopies and can be found in tree cavities. Host trees have a chance of being in the survey zone. Near the Big Eddy group, the state-endangered Western pond turtle would be less likely encountered by avoiding working in wet areas as detailed for plants.

Mitigations:

- ✓ In the Wautoma group, minimize work in wooded areas to the maximum extent practicable. If it is determined that a monument would need to be installed in an area with mature trees, do not stage near mature trees.

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

Explanation: This work would not impact any hydrologic body or function. The amount of soil disturbed would pose no threats to water bodies.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: Some wetlands are present near Big Eddy tracts; however, avoidance as described for plants here would preserve the integrity of wetlands.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: The limited depth of monuments that may be buried and their number would pose no impacts to groundwater or aquifers.

8. **Land Use and Specially Designated Areas**

Explanation: The low impact presented by the survey work and the ongoing coordination with the landowners would result in no effects to other existing land uses under the transmission line and along the access roads. Specially designated areas include the underlying tribal and BLM lands, the Yakama Reservation four miles away, and Horsethief Lake State Park 0.2 mile away. These would all be unaffected by the work as described.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: The only changes to visuals would be at monument locations; however, the caps that would be installed would be flush to the ground and visible only at close range.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: There would be only minor, localized, and temporary vehicle emissions while surveys and appraisals are performed. These would not rise above that typically seen during regular transmission operations by BPA and contract staff.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: Light noise would be produced by the work but it would occur during typical working hours and would not impact passers-by or neighbors.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: Appraisal and survey crews would follow applicable state and BPA safety protocols; the public's or landowners' safety would not be affected by the work.

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, if necessary:

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

Explanation, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: BPA is coordinating survey needs and negotiating acquisition rights with the various tract landowners. If new PLSS monuments are needed outside of BPA rights of way, those individual landowners would be engaged to acquire the proper permissions.

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

Signed: /s/ Michael J. O'Connell
Michael J. O'Connell, ECT-4
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: February 28, 2019