

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Bell-Usk No. 1 urgent access road repair and insulator replacement

PPA Project No: 4662

PP&A Project Manager: Robert Zeller – TFSF-Bell

Location: Pend Oreille County, WA

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

Description of the Proposed Action: The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to conduct access road repair and hardware replacement for the Bell-Usk No. 1 transmission line located on private land in Pend Oreille County, Washington. The proposed project would repair the access road leading to structure 38/3 of the Bell-Usk No. 1 transmission line so as to create sufficient access to the transmission line for replacement of hardware on structure 37/2 of the line. The hardware replacement would reduce potential fire risk.

The project would entail minor road grading and filling to reduce ruts within the access road. The grading would not impact the native soil beneath the fill that exists on the road. New rock would be laid down on top of the road and would not exceed 4 inches in depth. Additionally, the drainage ditch adjacent to the road would be cleaned and maintained so as to allow better surface water flow. The project site would be accessed using existing roads and no other access road or landing improvements would be needed.

Hardware and insulators would be replaced in-kind. To replace the insulators, linemen would access towers and disconnect the failing insulators and hardware. Installation would require a bucket truck and approximately two-to-four workers in the tower and one-to-two workers on the ground. Temporary cribbing may be utilized to level and stabilize the truck out-riggers.

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/ Adrienne Wojtasz

Adrienne Wojtasz

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange

Date: May 14, 2021

Katey C. Grange

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: Bell-Usk No. 1 urgent access road repair and insulator replacement

Project Site Description

The project is confined to the areas along the existing access road from Rocky Gorge Rd to Bell-Usk No. 1 structure 38/2. The project area is at an existing structure landing (37/2) and on an access road that is predominantly steep forested slopes characterized by ponderosa pine, Douglas fir, grand fir, western hemlock and western red cedar.

Proposed maintenance activity would be performed in the existing transmission line access road, on privately-owned lands.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA consulted with the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), the Kalispell Tribe of Indians, the confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CCT) on May 13, 2021 on a determination of "No Historic Properties Affected". Concurrence on this determination was received from all three entities on May 14, 2021.

Notes: BPA's TLM shall carry with them onsite BPA's Inadvertent Discovery of Cultural Resources Procedure. They shall review the procedure prior to conducting the work.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Localized soil disturbance would occur at the access road repair work areas. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized as necessary.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minimal disturbance to vegetation is anticipated. There would be no effect to ESA-listed plant species impacted. No impacts to state or federally sensitive species are anticipated. Project activities would be limited to the already impacted access road right-of-way and would not substantially alter existing plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In general, the project would have a small impact to wildlife and habitat related to temporary disturbance associated with elevated equipment noise and human presence. The project would have no impacts to state or federally-listed sensitive species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is not located within a floodplain and there are no nearby water bodies that support resident, anadromous, or ESA-listed fish. Erosion control best management practices would be used to ensure sedimentation into any water body does not occur.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are within the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No use of groundwater proposed. Maximum depth of disturbance would be about 2 feet below ground surface.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use. No specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be performed within existing transmission line access road right-of-ways.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have a temporary impact on air quality from a small amount of vehicle emissions and dust generated during construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be temporary construction noise. Operational noise of the transmission line would not change.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would allow safe and timely access to the transmission line which would help reduce outage times and maintain reliable power 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 Realty personnel and environmental specialist have coordinated the proposed project activities with the landowner prior to project initiation and any concerns regarding proposed transmission line maintenance activities have been addressed.

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

Signed: /s/ Adrienne Wojtasz
Adrienne Wojtasz, EPR-Bell-1
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: May 14, 2021