

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Authorization of Avista Corporation's Transmission Line Rebuild at BPA's Hatwai Substation

**Project No.:** LURR20220137

**Project Manager:** Amanda Raymond – TERR-BELL-1

**Location:** Nez Perce County, Idaho

**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 Avista Corporation, the applicant, to rebuild a portion of their single-circuit Hatwai-Moscow 230-kV transmission line, which is located on BPA fee-owned property associated with BPA's Hatwai Substation. The portion of Avista's rebuild project that would occur on BPA land includes replacing four deteriorating wood transmission line poles, as follows:

- Structure 61/8 is a three-pole structure that would be replaced with three steel poles 100 feet (left), 85 feet (center), and 100 feet tall (right)
- Structure 61/9 is a two-pole structure that would be replaced with two steel poles 85 feet tall
- Structure 61/10 is a three-pole structure that would be replaced with three steel poles 70 feet (left), 55 feet (center), and 70 feet tall (right)
- Structure 61/11 is a three-pole structure that would be replaced with three steel poles 75 feet (left), 60 feet (center), and 75 feet tall (right)

Holes for each new pole would be drilled to a maximum depth of 25 feet below ground surface and would be about 6 feet wide. A drilling-rig outfitted with a full-flight auger or with a coring bit, if bedrock is encountered, would be used to create the holes. Footings would be concrete anchor bolt cages that would extend approximately 1 foot above ground surface and would be up to 6 feet wide. The new steel structures would be installed within 15 feet of the wood structures to be replaced.

Optical ground wire would also be installed on the four new structures, and the existing conductor would be transferred from the existing structures, over to the new steel structures, with the exception of the span between 61/10 and 61/11. This span goes under BPA's Hatwai-Sworshak No.1 500kV transmission line between BPA structures 1/1 and 1/2. As such, this span would be restrung with new conductor to maintain the necessary ground and crossing clearances. Once the new transmission line is operational, then the deteriorating wood poles and anchors would be excavated from the ground and disposed of offsite.

Construction vehicles and equipment (including pickup trucks, line/bucket trucks, a crane to set the poles, stringing equipment, and a drill rig) would access the work area through existing access roads and through the wheat field. Staging areas would be centered around Avista's 61/8 and 61/9 structures. The locations for the stringing and tensioning of the conductor would be at Avista's 61/10 and 61/11 structures.

**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/ Becky Hill

Becky Hill  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

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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:** Authorization of Avista Corporation's Transmission Line Rebuild at BPA's Hatwai Substation

### **Project Site Description**

The project site is located on BPA-fee owned property associated with BPA's Hatwai Substation. The substation is located in ID T36N R5W Sec 13, and is located northeast of Hatwai Peak, at about 2,460 feet elevation. Lewiston, Idaho, is located about 6 miles southwest of the substation, Clearwater River is about 2 miles south of the substation, and a parcel of land belonging to the Nez Perce Reservation, is located immediately east of the BPA parcel. The BPA parcel of land is about 1,300 feet long, by about 1,500 feet wide, and the Hatwai Substation is oriented at about a 45-degree angle near the center of the parcel. The substation is surrounded by wheat fields on all sides; however, the western-most edge of the parcel (variable width of 110- to 170-feet wide by 1,300 feet long) is undeveloped. This undeveloped, unmaintained, natural area contains the following plant species: silky lupine, Canby's biscuitroot, balsamroot, common teasel, mullein, medusa head, prickly lettuce, horse weed, rabbit brush, yellow-star thistle, western service berry, yarrow, and native and non-native grasses. The project site is located at the northern side of the substation, where three of the four structures to be replaced are located within the wheat field. The fourth structure, 61/8, straddles a north-south wire fence in the northwest corner of the BPA parcel. Two of its wood poles are located on the undeveloped side of the fence (west), while the third wood pole (eastern-most) is located within the wheat field. No wetlands, streams, or waterbodies are located within 1,000 feet of the project site.

### **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

#### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

**Explanation:** The BPA historian and archaeologist reviewed the proposed action and initiated Section 106 consultation on May 18, 2022 with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, the Nez Perce Tribe, the Nez Perce Tribe Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO), and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) of Idaho. BPA received a response from the Nez Perce Tribe on May 18, 2022 with questions about the project, and received a response from the SHPO of Idaho on May 23, 2022.

On October 21, 2022, the BPA archaeologist determined that the proposed undertaking would not affect historic properties, and notified the consulting parties. Subsequent to consultation with the Nez Perce THPO, BPA identified a culturally significant area within the project area. Through consultation with the Nez Perce THPO, minimization efforts were identified to protect the area during implementation of the project. Minimization measures would consist of using protective matting to cover the area during construction. The Idaho SHPO and Nez Perce THPO concurred with BPA's determination of no adverse effect made pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Notes:

- A Post Review Discovery Procedure form with contact information for the BPA cultural resources lead would be supplied to the construction contractor prior to commencing construction work. Should any cultural resources be discovered during project activities, then all project work must stop in the area, and the cultural resources lead should be notified immediately.
- Avista and its affiliates/contractors may only access structure 61/8 through the existing agriculture field (to the east).
- Install temporary, protection mats on top of all vegetation in the naturally vegetated area near structure 61/8 where vehicles, equipment, personnel, and work would occur to remove the structure.
- All vehicles, equipment, personnel, and work must be limited to the matted surfaces surrounding structure 61/8 to avoid impacts to surrounding, unprotected vegetation.
- Once structure 61/8 is removed, the area surrounding the structure would not be converted into agriculture production, but instead, stay as an undeveloped, natural area.
- Avista Corporation would be responsible for coordinating with the Nez Perce THPO on a Nez Perce THPO-acceptable seed mix, and revegetation materials and methods, for the small area of bare soil that would be created after the removal of structure 61/8's wood poles.

## **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: To install the new transmission line poles and remove the deteriorating wood poles and anchors from the ground, about 1,000 square feet of ground disturbance would occur. Best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented to prevent the migration of sediment off-site.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: About 700 square feet of wheat would be disturbed, but would be returned to agriculture production upon project completion. Additionally, an area about 300 square feet in size near structure 61/8 containing the following species, would be temporarily compressed by protection mats during project construction: silky lupine, common teasel, mullein, medusa head, prickly lettuce, horse weed, rabbit brush, yellow-star thistle, western service berry, yarrow, and native and non-native grasses. The culturally-important plants would also be temporarily compressed by mats near 61/8; however, the vegetation under the mats is expected to recover to pre-project conditions upon project completion. Disturbed areas in the wheat field would be returned to wheat production by the farmer leasing the land upon project completion. There are no other special-status plants or habitats in the project area. Therefore, the proposed action would have a small, temporary impact special-status and non-sensitive vegetation.

Notes:

- Avista Corporation would be responsible for coordinating with the Nez Perce THPO on a Nez Perce THPO-acceptable seed mix, and revegetation materials and methods, for the small area of bare soil that would be created after the removal of structure 61/8's wood poles.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no documented occurrences of special-status wildlife species or suitable habitat for special-status wildlife species present in the project area. Minor and temporary disturbance of general wildlife species could occur from elevated noise during construction. Because the work would be occurring adjacent to a currently operating substation, any wildlife present are likely used to human presence and noise. Therefore, the proposed project would have a small impact on general wildlife species, but the proposed action would not have an effect on special-status wildlife species or habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area does not contain any water bodies, floodplains, fish, or fish habitat. Therefore, the project would not impact water bodies, floodplains, fish, or fish habitat.

- 5. **Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area does not contain any wetlands. Therefore, the project would not impact wetlands.

- 6. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Ground disturbance is unlikely to reach depths to groundwater and no new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers are proposed. BMPs would prevent impacts from unintended spills to groundwater or aquifers. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

Notes:

- Maintain an oil/fuel spill kit on-site during construction to address containment, cleanup, and disposal in the event of a spill.

- 7. **Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Three of the four structures to be replaced are located in a wheat field surrounding the Hatwai Substation, while the fourth is partially located in the wheat field and partially located in an undeveloped naturally vegetated area. The proposed action would not change the land use at this site, and there are no specially-designated areas in the project area.

- 8. **Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The new steel structures to be installed would be coated with a brown color that would allow the new structures to blend in with the colors of the natural landscape surrounding

the project area. Therefore, the proposed action would not substantive change the visual quality of the project area.

## 9. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction activities would result in a minor and temporary increase in dust and vehicle emissions in the local area. BMPs, such as turning off vehicles when not in use, would be implemented to limit the amount of emissions released in the local area. However, there would not be a substantive change in air quality as a result of the proposed action.

## 10. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During construction, use of vehicles and equipment, and general construction activities would create noise above current ambient conditions. However, noise impacts would be temporary (about 10 business days) and intermittent and would only occur during typical working hours (approximately 7 AM to 7 PM). There would be no long-term change in ambient noise following completion of the project.

## 11. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All standard safety protocols would be followed in the project area. The proposed action would not impact human health or safety.

### **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: The project area is located on BPA fee-owned property. Avista Corporation will continue to coordinate with the farmer that is currently leasing the BPA land for wheat production. Avista Corporation is responsible for coordinating with the Nez Perce THPO on a Nez Perce THPO-acceptable seed/root mix, revegetation materials, and methods, for the small area of bare soil that would be created after the removal of structure 61/8's three wood poles.

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

Signed: /s/ Becky Hill

Becky Hill  
Environmental Protection Specialist

January 17, 2023

Date