

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Grizzly Mountain Communications Site - Beam Path Maintenance

PP&A No.: 4818

Project Manager: Bill Merriam

Location: Crook County, Oregon

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

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to cut a total of 37 live/dead trees at the Grizzly Mountain Communications Site that are currently interfering with the Grizzly Mountain to Grizzly Substation microwave beam path. All 37 trees would be felled manually with chainsaws. Limbs from all trees would be lopped and scattered to a depth of no more than 18 inches. Twelve trees, located closest to the communications site, would be dragged or winched to a temporary landing near the communications site, where they would be managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The boles of the remaining trees would be cut into lengths of no more than 24 inches and dispersed as widely as possible.

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/ Oden Jahn

Oden Jahn

Natural Resource Specialist (Environmental Compliance)

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

Date: February 27, 2023

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: Grizzly Mountain Radio Site - Beam Path Maintenance

Project Site Description

The project site is located near the top of Grizzly Mountain, approximately 11 miles northwest of Prineville, Oregon. The beam path in the project area crosses moderately sloped and rocky terrain populated with mostly Douglas-firs and other conifers. The land in the project area is managed by the Prineville District BLM and Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL).

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: With BPA agreement, BLM is the lead Federal agency for complying with Section 106. BLM proceeded to survey the area of potential effects for removing trees in the Grizzly Mountain radio site beam path. BLM surveyed both their property as well as the portion on Oregon Department of Lands (DSL) property. For the portion on BLM property, a short report was prepared and BLM is in compliance with Stipulation VI.C. of BLM's State Protocol between the Oregon-Washington BLM and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Officer. For the portion on DSL property, BLM documented compliance with Section 106 via their State Protocol as well. However, due to no mechanized equipment being utilized on DSL property, this work was addressed as exempt from SHPO review under "Appendix E: Other Program Actions, 7" of the BLM State Protocol.

Notes: The BPA Forestry Department would be responsible for implementing the following conservation measures from the BLM Upper Deschutes Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan (ROD/RMP) during this project:

- If any cultural and/or paleontological resources (e.g., historic or prehistoric objects, features, structures, or fossils) are found during project implementation, operations would be suspended until the site has been evaluated by a BPA and BLM Archaeologist.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Dragging or winching trees has the potential to disturb surface soils in the area near the communication site.

Notes: The BPA Forestry Department would be responsible for implementing the following conservation measures from the BLM ROD/RMP during this project:

- Machine operations would be timed to minimize adverse impacts to other resources. Timing of operations on a daily and seasonal basis would include such concerns as sensitive soils, proximity to residences and recreational sites/designated trails, cultural resources, and special-status plant and animal species.

- Operations would be designed and implemented to minimize the loss of site productivity caused by soil compaction, displacement, or erosion.
- Tractor skidding would normally be limited to slopes of less than 35%. Soil moisture conditions would be monitored and operations would be suspended before excessive compaction or displacement occurs.
- Previously disturbed areas and existing openings would be used where practicable to establish landing sites.
- Mounds and berms would be smoothed to the original contour.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: There are no known Federal/state special-status plants, or BLM sensitive plants in the project area.

Notes: The BPA Forestry Department would be responsible for implementing the following conservation measures from the BLM ROD/RMP during this project:

- Machines, vehicles, and other equipment must be cleaned prior to working within the project area, and inspected by BLM prior to initiating work.
- Minimize soil disturbance as much as possible.
- Do not spread weeds or other unwanted vegetation.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: There are no known Federal/state special-status wildlife species in the project area; however, the area is within crucial winter habitat for Rocky Mountain elk.

Notes: The BPA Forestry Department would be responsible for implementing the following conservation measures from the BLM ROD/RMP during this project:

- Trees containing a nest or cavity are not permitted to be removed.
- The project area is within crucial winter range for Rocky Mountain elk. No ground disturbance or otherwise disruptive activities may occur from December 1 – April 30. An exception may be requested and approved by the BLM Prineville District Office.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no waterbodies, floodplains, Federal/state special-status aquatic species, or habitat in the project area.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands in the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project does not have the potential to impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no specially-designated areas in the vicinity of the project area. The communication site is occupied by several users. The proposed project would not interfere with other users.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would have no significant impact on visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would have no significant impact on air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project is not located in the vicinity of any residential properties. Noise impacts would be temporary and occur only during daylight hours.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Forestry activities carry the risk of starting wildfires.

Notes: The BPA Forestry Department would be responsible for implementing the following conservation measures from the BLM ROD/RMP during this project:

- Operators would be required to follow current Prineville District BLM Industrial Fire Precaution Levels (IFPL).

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 and Forestry personnel have coordinated the proposed project activities with the Prineville District BLM, and Oregon DSL and any concerns regarding the proposed microwave beam path maintenance activities have been addressed. The Prineville District BLM prepared Categorical Exclusion documentation (DOI-BLM-ORWA-P060-2022-0024-CX, Dated 9/20/2022, Effective 10/22/2022) to cover the management of the trees and debris generated by BPA's proposed action. By implementing the conservation measures described above, the proposed action would be consistent with the BLM Upper Deschutes Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan.

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

Signed: /s/ Oden Jahn Date: February 27, 2023
Oden Jahn
Natural Resource Specialist (Environmental Compliance)