

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Umatilla Electric Conversion of Overhead Transmission Line to Underground in BPA Right-of-way

**Project No.:** LURR 19920312

**Project Manager:** Joe Cottrell, TERR-Tri-Cities-RMHO

**Location:** Umatilla County, Oregon

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B.4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way

**Description of the Proposed Action:** The Bonneville Power Administration proposes to allow the Umatilla Electric Cooperative to convert about 0.5 miles of 3 phase overhead conductor to 3 4/0 underground north of the Umatilla Electric Substation. As part of the project, Umatilla Electric would remove ten poles and would install six sector/junction boxes, one new transformer, and one new pole at the west end of the project area. Several of the poles are located next to Highway 730 in ODOT right-of-way but also cross under BPA transmission lines heading to McNary Substation. The area of BPA-owned right-of-way is located south of the McNary Substation and just north of Highway 730 and east of Highway 82 in Umatilla, Oregon. Scaplehorn Road crosses through the project area. The site is located in Township 5 North, Range 28 East, Section 16.

**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/ Christopher H. Furey

Christopher H. Furey  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel  
NEPA Compliance Officer  
Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

Date: September 5, 2019

# 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.

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## Project Site Description

The project involving conversion of overhead transmission line to underground would be on maintained BPA right-of-way. The project area consists of the dry arid area south of the McNary Substation that is managed for low-growing vegetation. The surrounding topography consists of flat areas with neighboring parcels comprised of dry undeveloped areas, developed home sites, and some farmed land. The Brownlee Irrigation Ditch and McNary Substation is located north of the project area and Highway 82 is west of the project area. A review of the National Wetland Inventory, soil information, topography, and aerial photos did not reveal any wetlands or waterbodies at or near the site except for the Brownlee Irrigation ditch. The McNary Wildlife Nature Area and the Columbia River are over 3,000 feet to the north of the project location.

## Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. <b>Historic and Cultural Resources</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> BPA archaeologist reviewed proposed activities and determined that these activities at the project area for the installation of the underground wire and junction boxes would not have potential to cause effects to historic or cultural resources based on the field survey. The Umatilla Indian Reservation has concurred with the area of potential effect and has requested an archaeological monitor be present for ground-disturbing work given the proximity of potential historic sites.</p> <p>UEC may proceed with the condition that an archaeological monitor would be on site for ground-disturbing work.</p>		
2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> There would be some soil disturbance for installation of the underground wire and new conductor. Some digging would be expected for the new underground line and installation at a depth of four feet and for removal of posts. Use of BMPs for dust and soil control would be expected to be used.</p> <p>➤ Use caution when digging to avoid impacts to underground sewer line north of Scaplehorn Road.</p>		
3. <b>Plants</b> (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The project would be occurring in the BPA right-of-way that is currently managed for low-growing vegetation with minimal impacts to non-listed plants. There are no listed or special-status species present.</p>		

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



Explanation: The work would be in established BPA right-of-way. No trees would be removed, and the site is not identified to provide northern spotted owl habitat or nesting sites. Conversion of the overhead transmission line to underground is expected to occur during daytime hours with limited to no effect to any non-listed, listed, or special-status species.

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



Explanation: The nearest water is the Brownlee Irrigation ditch located at the north side of the project area. An emergent wetland is located approximately 1,100 feet south of the project area, and the McNary Wildlife Nature Area with Social Security Pond and the Columbia River is over 3,000 feet to the north of the project location. There would be no in-water work occurring and project activities would not be in the ditch, wetland, nature area pond, or Columbia River. Use of BMPs for dust and soil control would be expected to be used.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: No wetlands are present at the project area. An emergent wetland exists approximately 1,100 feet south of the project area.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: The shallow digging for the project would not impact groundwater or aquifers. Use caution when digging to avoid impacts to underground sewer line north of Scaplehorn Road.

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



Explanation: There would be no lasting impact to the right-of-way located south of McNary Substation and adjacent to Highway 730 and Highway 82. Umatilla Electric Cooperative would plan to cut into and bury line under Scaplehorn Road that would close the road for a short period of time until UEC completes patching the road.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: There would be limited visual changes to the project area or surrounding environment.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions would occur during installation.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours. No ongoing noise increase is expected.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: There would be no impacts to human health and 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, 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: An existing 2000 gallon propane tank with approximately 1800 gallons of fuel would be included and under control of the county with the completion of the sale.

- 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:

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### **Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Description: BPA Realty is in coordination with the Umatilla Electric Cooperative for this project.

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

Signed: /s/ Christopher H. Furey  
Christopher H. Furey, ECT-4  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: September 5, 2019