

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Monroe-Custer Access Road Improvements

PP&A No.: 4247

Project Manager: Donna Martin – TELF TPP-3

Location: Skagit and Whatcom counties, WA

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

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is proposing to conduct road work on approximately 10,000 feet of access roads in the 35, 61, and 62 mile of the Monroe-Custer No. 2 corridor. The proposed road work includes improvement, reconstruction, and new construction. Road improvement and reconstruction would require the application of various sizes of aggregate, blading, and compaction. New road construction would also require brushing prior to the application of aggregate. BPA would also install approximately 20,000 square feet of landing area adjacent to structures to provide access to the towers. Landing construction would include the removal of brush, blading, grading, and the application and compaction of aggregate. In addition to the road improvement and new construction, BPA also proposes to install approximately 4 drain dips and 100 feet of ditch relief; and construct 3,500 feet of v-ditch, 12 cross drain culverts, one gate, and clean one existing culvert. Cleaning an existing culvert includes removal of any debris blocking the inlet and outlet. BPA would use approximately 20,000 feet of existing road to access the construction areas, noted as “Direction of Travel” in the work summary. No work would be completed on any roads labeled as “Direction of Travel.” To accomplish this, light-duty trucks, bulldozers, dump trucks, excavators, graders, and other equipment may be used.

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/ Jonnel Deacon
Jonnel Deacon
Physical Scientist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel
Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: October 16, 2020

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.

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Project Site Description

The proposed project is located in Skagit and Whatcom counties, WA. The surrounding area is a mix of Washington State Department of Natural Resource land and private timber lands as well as some rural houses.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A cultural resources survey and Section 106 consultation were completed for the project APE. No resources were identified in the immediate vicinity of the proposed work areas. Washington DAHP agreed with a no effects determination from a survey report; on 07/15/2020, Log No.: 2020-02-01478-BPA. If resources are discovered during construction activities, work would cease and the appropriate archaeological resources (BPA and WA DAHP) would be contacted.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Sites would be stabilized upon completion of project activities. Stormwater BMPs would be used as needed during the project to protect the surrounding area from runoff and erosion issues.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Work would occur in areas maintained as an open transmission line corridor. No special-status species are present. A survey conducted in November 2019 by BPA employees confirmed no presence of special-status species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Work would occur in areas maintained as an open transmission line corridor. No special-status species are present. A survey conducted in November 2019 by BPA employees confirmed no presence of special-status species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No in-water work would be required. Appropriate stormwater BMPs would be used during the project as needed to control runoff or erosion. Work areas would be stabilized upon completion of project activities. A no effect determination addressing ESA-listed aquatic species and essential fish habitat was completed for the project.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands occur at or within the area of influence of the work sites. A field visit in November 2019 by BPA employees confirmed that no wetlands occur in the area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities do not have the potential to impact groundwater or aquifers, including public and private water wells or springs. Any spills would be addressed immediately and follow BPA protocol for cleanup and regulatory notifications.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project locations are within existing transmission line rights-of-way and would not change existing land uses.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed improvements are consistent with the surroundings and would not significantly change the existing visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project has a short duration and involves normal construction equipment activities. A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions is expected due to construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Noise disturbance would be limited to general construction equipment activities, would be for a short duration, and would only occur during daylight hours.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No known hazardous conditions are known. Completion of this project would increase system stability and reliability to the service area.

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: Underlying and surrounding landowners would be notified and coordinated with in advance of the proposed project. A meeting with landowners was conducted in November 2019 to review the proposed design and provide feedback.

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

Signed: /s/ Jonnell Deacon
Physical Scientist-EPR-4

October 16, 2020