

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Grand Coulee – Foster Creek No. 1 Line Upgrade

PP&A No.: 4129

Project Manager: Meadow Nelson

Location: Douglas County, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.13 Upgrading and rebuilding existing power lines.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to upgrade the Grand Coulee – Niles Corner section of the 115 kV Grand Coulee – Foster Creek No. 1 line to mitigate thermal overloads during peak summer outage conditions. The upgrade would require that nine impairments be remedied. An impairment is an area where the distance from the conductor to the ground surface is inadequate, per National Electrical Safety Code (NESC) standards, resulting in a threat to line reliability and posing a risk to public health and safety.

At four of the nine locations, BPA proposes to raise the height of the transmission line approximately 10 feet by replacing the existing wood poles with taller wood poles. Proposed structure replacement work would utilize the following type of equipment: line truck, auger truck, and tractor-trailer.

At five of the nine locations, BPA proposes to excavate soil from under the transmission line conductors; the soil would be spread evenly along low-lying portions of the right-of-way, stabilized and seeded, or disposed of properly off site. Proposed excavation work would utilize the following type of equipment: excavators, bulldozers, and dump trucks.

Additionally to accommodate higher load ratings, at two switch structures BPA proposes to replace existing interrupters, switch platforms, platform grounding, and cathodic protection. Proposed excavation replacement work would entail the use of electrical boom truck and an excavator.

See Table 1 below for structure and switch location details.

Table 1: Grand Coulee - Foster Creek No. 1 Project Locations		
Span	T R S	Impairment Remedy/Work Requirement
3/8	T29N R30E SEC33	Relocate rock pile
4/9	T29N R30E SEC29	Excavation
8/8	T29N R29E SEC26	Structure raise
13/3	T29N R28E SEC24	Structure raise
14/5	T29N R28E SEC23	Structure raise
15/7	T29N R28E SEC22	Excavation
16/8	T29N R28E SEC21	Structure raise

Table 1: Grand Coulee - Foster Creek No. 1 Project Locations (<i>continued</i>)		
Span	T R S	Impairment Remedy/Work Requirement
18/6	T29N R28E SEC19	Excavation
19/4	T29N R27E SEC24	Excavation
21/3S	T29N R27E SEC23	Replace Switch Structure
21/4S	T29N R27E SEC22	Replace Switch Structure

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/ Kevin George
 Kevin B. George
 Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel
 Sarah T. Biegel Date: September 20, 2022
 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.

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Project Site Description

The project area is located in Douglas County, WA and would occur on privately-owned lands in addition to lands managed by Washington State Lands. The land use in the area is mainly agricultural and pastoral with some areas of shrub-steppe habitat.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: On August 10, 2021, BPA initiated National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 consultation with the following parties:

- Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
- Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
- Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP)

BPA determined that the proposed undertaking would result in a **no adverse effect to historic properties** (BPA CR Project No.: WA 2019 064; DAHP Log No.: 2021-08-05291-BPA). The cultural resources determination letter was submitted on August 11, 2022, to the consulting parties, and on August 11, 2022, DAHP concurrent with BPA's determination of effects. On August 17, 2022, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation concurred. On August 29, 2022, DNR stated if Site DO1217 is avoided, there are no further concerns and concur with a recommendation of "no historic properties affected" for the project.

Notes:

- Implement an IDP in the unlikely event that cultural material is encountered during the implementation of this project. BPA would require that work be halted in the vicinity of the finds to ensure integrity of the site and materials until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.
- BPA would have site 45DO1217 roped off during construction activities to ensure crews would not enter that area.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project would involve soil removal at four conductor impairment sites and the subsequent re-distribution and stabilization of soils near the removal

locations and within the right-of-way. Localized soil disturbance would occur at the four wood pole sites where the structures are to be raised. At the two switch structures that are to be replaced, localized soil disturbance is anticipated. Soils disturbed during wood pole and switch stand replacements would be regraded and stabilized. Currently there is one rock pile on site that would need to be moved to an adjacent location in the right-of-way.

Notes:

- Erosion control Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be used to stabilize soil during and after construction.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

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

Notes:

- Any un-rocked disturbed areas would be seeded with a geographical and climate-appropriate seed mix or one approved by the landowner.

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. No special-status species or designated habitat present. Work would be performed in existing ROW.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project would not be in a floodplain. There are no streams or drainages in or near the project areas and therefore, no fish would be impacted.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would not impact any wetlands in the vicinity of the project.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No new wells or use of groundwater proposed; maximum depth of disturbance would be about 10 feet.

Notes:

- Spill response materials and tools would be present on site.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The work would occur on existing ROW and access roads and would not impact land use.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed actions would occur on existing access roads and transmission ROW and would not alter or affect visual quality. New wood-poles switch stands would not be noticeably different than existing poles and stands.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Exhaust and dust from utility and construction equipment may temporarily reduce air quality in the immediate project area.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction noise would be temporary and localized.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to human health and safety are anticipated. Remedying the nine impairment locations would additionally reduce risks for wildfire and electrocution.

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 environmental staff have coordinated the proposed project activities with Washington State Lands and private landowners.

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

Signed: /s/ Kevin George

Kevin B. George, EPI-4
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: September 20, 2022