

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Bell-Boundary Span Rebuild (*Update to Previous CX issued April 30, 2021*)

**Project Manager:** Meadow Nelson – TEPL-TPP-1

**PP&A WO#:** 4883

**Location:** Stevens County, Washington

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B4.6 Additions and Modifications to Transmission Facilities

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to rebuild three spans of the double-circuit Bell-Boundary No. 3 – Addy-Colville No. 1 transmission line located in Stevens County, Washington. Rebuilding the line spans would remedy a radio noise complaint from adjacent landowners.

Rebuilding the spans would include replacing three double-circuit wood pole structures (Bell-Boundary 53/2 – Addy-Colville 2/2, Bell-Boundary 53/3 – Addy-Colville 2/3, and Bell-Boundary 53/4 – Addy-Colville 2/4) with new wood-pole structures in the same locations. Conductor and other components on these structures would be replaced. Additionally, insulators would be replaced on the Addy-Colville transmission line circuit on structures 1/4 and 2/1; Bell-Boundary line circuit on structure 52/7; and both line circuits on the Bell-Boundary 53/5 – Addy-Colville 2/5 structure. Expansion of the landing at Bell-Boundary 53/4 – Addy Colville 2/4 structure would occur to ensure sufficient space to rebuild the structure using large equipment. Landing work would include grading and potentially placing rock for a 50 feet by 50 feet landing pad. Other structures have flat areas that would be used as landings.

Some of the guy wire anchors on the structures proposed for replacement would be reused. Bell-Boundary 53/4 – Addy-Colville 2/4 would require two additional guy wires that would be attached to existing anchors. Bell-Boundary 53/2 – Addy-Colville 2/2 would require three new guy wires with new anchors. Additionally, overhead ground wire would be installed on the three spans to be replaced (Bell-Boundary 53/2 – Addy-Colville 2/2, Bell-Boundary 53/3 – Addy-Colville 2/3, and Bell-Boundary 53/4 – Addy-Colville 2/4) but only to Addy-Colville circuit. A series of wires and grounding rods (called counterpoise) would be used to establish a low resistance path from the overhead groundwire to earth for lightning protection. The counterpoise, installed at the three structures proposed for replacement, would be buried between the poles and connected to grounding rods placed at the pole bases.

Conductor pulling/tensioning sites would be located at Bell-Boundary 53/2 – Addy Colville 2/2 and Bell-Boundary 53/4 – Addy-Colville 2/4. These sites are used for pulling and tightening the conductor and overhead groundwire cables to the correct tension once they are mounted on the transmission line structures. At Bell-Boundary 53/2 – Addy-Colville 2/2, the site would be located on and off the right-of-way; at Bell-Boundary 53/4 – Addy-Colville 2/4, the site would be adjacent

to the structure and partially off the right-of-way. Pulling and tensioning sites use an area about 250 feet long by 100 feet wide (right-of-way width) ahead or back on line of a structure. Ground disturbance would occur from leveling and grading of the sites.

Road improvement, reconstruction, and landing work would be needed to upgrade existing access roads and provide work areas at structures. Improvement of about 1,600 feet of existing road would include grading and placing rock but no widening. Reconstruction of about 2,400 feet of existing road would include grading, placing rock, and widening to about 14 feet. Work would be conducted with the use of dump trucks, excavators, drum compactors, and graders.

Two sections of fence would be removed and new fence installed to meet BPA requirements for distances between fencing and transmission lines. West of Bell-Boundary 53/2 – Addy-Colville 2/2, about 200 feet of fence would be removed and replaced about 65 feet farther west. North of Bell-Boundary 53/4 – Addy-Colville 2/4, about 140 feet of fence would be replaced in the same location. Both sections of fence would be replaced with nonconductive fencing.

Update - BPA proposes to cut danger trees in, or adjacent to, transmission line right of way (ROW) between Bell-Boundary 53/2 and 53/4. Tree felling would be performed by individuals qualified to cut trees in proximity of transmission lines and would utilize common tools (chainsaws), rigging, wood chippers and work trucks. Debris would be disposed of onsite, along the ROW, using cut, lop, and scatter techniques or by on-site chipping/mulching.

A material storage and equipment staging yard would be located adjacent to the Bell-Boundary 52/5 – Addy-Colville 1/4 structure. The yard would be temporary and about 1.5 acres in size based on the area needed to accommodate equipment, used and new wood poles, conductor, and other materials.

**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/ Adrienne Wojtasz

Adrienne Wojtasz

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Date: January 6, 2023

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment: 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: Bell-Boundary Span Rebuild (Update to Previous CX issued April 30, 2021)**

## **Project Site Description**

The Bell-Boundary transmission line traverses a north-south trending valley at about 1,620 feet in elevation. The valley is surrounded by mountainous terrain managed by the Colville National Forest on the east and the Washington Department of Natural Resources on the west.

About 500 feet east of the project site, the Colville River flows along the east edge of the valley. The river has been channelized in this area to avoid agricultural fields identified as NWI (desktop mapped) wetlands and FEMA floodplains associated with the Colville River and other tributaries in the valley. The northern end of the project area (fence replacement area north of Bell-Boundary 53/4 — Addy-Colville 2/4) is about 240 feet south of the NWI wetland/floodplain boundary.

Agriculture is the primary land use in the valley although the transmission line crosses over an inactive magnesium mine within the project area. The line did cross directly over the open pits and mine facilities until about 1.8 miles of line was moved in the 1980s to accommodate the mine. Vegetation (consisting of grasses) within the right-of-way and adjacent areas is sparse. Two forested areas are adjacent to the right-of-way east and west of the span replacement area.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area was surveyed by a BPA archaeologist and a determination letter which stated no historic properties would be affected by project activities was distributed to the Idaho Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Kalispel Tribe of Indians, and Spokane Tribe of Indians on March 24, 2021. The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation concurred on April 20, 2021, and the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation concurred on March 24, 2021.

Notes:

- Stop work and immediately notify the BPA Cultural Resource Lead, appropriate BPA project staff, interested Tribes, and Idaho DAHP in the event any archaeological material is encountered during project activities.

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Soil disturbance would occur.

Notes:

- Require dust abatement on roads and at construction sites to reduce potential for magnesium-laden dust to coat equipment, vehicles, or transmission facilities.

- Designate areas to be used to store equipment, and have vehicles avoid areas contaminated by mine activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status species present. Some grasses (mostly non-native species used to revegetate disturbed mining areas) would be removed or disturbed. Disturbed areas would be reseeded.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status species or designated habitat present. Additionally, general wildlife habitat is not likely present due to the considerable disturbance to the area from the magnesium mine.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Work would not occur in the FEMA floodplains north of the project area. The Colville River contains resident fish but no special-status fish; no in-water work would occur. Typical erosion control BMPs would be implemented and no riparian habitat would be affected.

### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Work would not occur in the NWI wetlands north of the project area.

### **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or use of groundwater proposed; maximum depth of disturbance would be about 13 feet. Spill prevention measures would be present on site.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Land use would not change; project is located on a former magnesium mine and not within a specially-designated area.

### **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The rebuilt spans would look the same as the existing spans. Portions of the existing chain link fence would be replaced with wood fence. Because of the distance to potential observers, the difference would likely not be noticeable.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Small amount of dust and vehicle emissions due to construction would be generated (see note under Geology and Soils regarding dust control).

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary construction noise during daylight hours. Operational noise would not change. BPA's intention is to reduce local radio noise impacts.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During project activities, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Project activities would not impact human health or safety; however, if changes to the footprint are required, this would need to be reevaluated due to proximity to known waste deposits of contaminated materials.

### 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: NA

**Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.**

Explanation: NA

**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: The Washington Department of Ecology regulates water and hazardous waste activities at Alcoa's Northwest Alloys magnesium smelter. They were consulted regarding proposed activities and provided documentation that all project activities would be occurring outside areas where waste deposits or contaminated materials are known or suspected to be present.

**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: NA

**Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Description: BPA would notify underlying landowners before work begins

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

/s/ Adrienne Wojtasz

Adrienne Wojtasz

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: January 6, 2023