

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Bandon-Rogue No. 1 Structure 39/5 Urgent Replacement Project

PP&A No.: 4900

Project Manager: Jeff Hurt – TEPL-TPP-2

Location: Curry County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance; B4.6 Additions and Modifications to Transmission Facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to enlarge a landing and replace a recently damaged wood pole structure on the Bandon-Rogue No. 1 high voltage transmission line in Curry County, southwest Oregon. BPA owns and operates the Bandon – Rogue No. 1 transmission line, which runs from Bandon Substation in Coos County, OR, south through the Coast Mountain Range to Rogue Substation in Curry County, OR. At line mile/structure number 39/5, a tree recently fell into the line and significantly damaged the wood pole structure, making it a high risk to the safety and reliability of the transmission line. BPA proposes to replace the wood pole structure and associated hardware with a new wood pole structure at the same location. To safely access and construct the new wood pole structure, the existing landing would need to be enlarged to accommodate BPA transmission line bucket trucks. Two landings, approximately 50 ft. x 50 ft., would be installed immediately back-on-line (BOL) and ahead-on-line (AOL) of the wood pole structure, increasing the footprint of the existing landing by cutting into the adjacent hill slope BOL, and filling in the slope AOL. A more robust, larger road approach of approximately 30 to 50 feet would be required to safely provide access to the structure location from the main road. The new landing footprint and approach would be rocked and stabilized, and the road cuts would be seeded with a native, erosion control seed mix, and stabilized with hydroseed and erosion control blankets. Equipment would include an excavator, roller, and dump trucks, as well as electrical bucket truck and light duty trucks. The work would occur in spring of 2023.

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/ Aaron Siemers

Aaron Siemers

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel Date: March 20, 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: Bandon-Rogue No. 1 Structure 39/5 Urgent Replacement Project

Project Site Description

The project is located in the Oregon Coast Range, in the Coastal Uplands level IV ecoregion. The Coastal Uplands is comprised of the headlands, high marine terraces, hills and low mountains that border the coastal lowlands, with the Pacific Ocean relatively close to the west. The climate is heavily marine-influenced, with rainy winters and abundant fog during the dry summer season, which reduces vegetation stress. The ecoregion roughly follows the historical distribution of Sitka spruce in the Coast Range, but after extensive logging, tree cover today is mainly comprised of western hemlock and Douglas- fir, and red alder in riparian areas. The understory is comprised of salal, sword fern, vine maple, and other common Northwest shrubs. Topography can vary dramatically from peak to valley.

The Bandon-Rogue No. 1 high voltage transmission corridor is the central component of the project area. The cleared corridor is approximately 250 ft. in width. Vegetation in the corridor is routinely managed to promote low-growing vegetation and cut any tall-growing trees that could encroach on the energized conductor. The Bandon-Rogue No. 1 transmission line shares the corridor with 230 kV Fairview-Rogue No. 1 line, which is supported by steel lattice structures.

At the 39/5 structure location, the damaged wood pole structure is located on a hillside with an existing landing. A gravel road runs approximately 100 ft. to the north, providing the main access to the area and to local residences. Vegetation includes sword fern, Oregon grape, native grasses, and Himalayan blackberry. The project is located on private land, with rural residential and private timber and agricultural land use. A wetland is present immediately to the east of 39/5, approximately 85 feet away, and borders an unnamed tributary to Euchre Creek. No in-water work or impacts to the wetland or waterway would be required to complete the project.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: An Area of Potential Effects (APE) was developed for the project. The project APE was surveyed in 2010 prior to the rebuild of the line in that period. No cultural resources were identified at that time. On February 14, 2023, BPA initiated consultation with the Tolawa Dee-ni' Nation; the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians; the Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe; the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon; the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians; the Coquille Indian Tribe; and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, and determined that the project will result in no historic properties affected. No consulted parties responded with comment during the consultation period.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA would require that work be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA and in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Access road improvements and landing construction would involve blading and excavation of the adjacent hillside to enlarge the landing, deposition of the excavated material on the down-hill slope, followed by placement of rock and compaction of the landing footprint. Disturbed, un-rocked soils would be stabilized with hydromulch, native seed, and erosion control blankets. BPA's transmission line maintenance crews would remove the existing, damaged structure; excavate or auger holes for the new wood pole structure; and backfill the holes with native and/or imported material. As necessary, and particularly near sensitive areas, erosion and sediment control best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented, such as straw mulch, wattles, and silt fence. Restoration efforts would be inspected prior to de-mobilization, and monitored to ensure final stabilization goals are met.

Notes:

- BPA's access road contractor would return to the site once the new structure is set to seed and stabilize all disturbed cuts and fills.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Landing and access improvements as well as structure demolition and construction would disturb the vegetation that is immediately adjacent to or growing within the existing landing. However, impacts to vegetation would be limited to the immediate work area near structure 39/5. Those unrocked, disturbed areas would be hydroseeded with a native, erosion control seed mix, stabilized, and monitored to ensure revegetation.

In accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), BPA obtained an official species list on March 16, 2023, from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to analyze the proposed project's impacts to plant species protected under the ESA. The western lily is listed as endangered in the greater project location; however, the project area does not contain western lily habitat, and BPA has determined that the project would have "No Effect" on western lily.

No documented State of Oregon special-status species or habitats are present in the project area.

Notes:

- Disturbed, unrocked areas would be seeded with a native seed mix and temporarily stabilized with hydromulch and erosion control blankets, and monitored to ensure final stabilization goals are achieved.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Access road construction, wood pole structure demolition, and reconstruction of 39/5 would temporarily disturb local wildlife, including mammals and birds, due to human presence and noise from heavy equipment. However, disturbance would be temporary, during daylight hours, and limited to the immediate project area. The surrounding land provides ample habitat and cover for any wildlife disturbed by the project's activities.

In accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), BPA obtained an official species list on March 16, 2023, from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to analyze the proposed project's impacts to wildlife species protected under the ESA. The marbled murrelet, northern spotted owl, and western snowy plover are listed as threatened in the greater project location; however, the project area does not contain suitable habitat for these species, and BPA has determined that the project would have "No Effect" on marbled murrelet, northern spotted owl, and western snowy plover.

No documented State of Oregon special-status species or habitats are present in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: An unnamed tributary to Euchre Creek is present approximately 100 feet to the east of structure 39/5. The waterway is not listed in State databases as fish-bearing. No in-water work is planned, and the waterway would be protected using erosion and sediment control best management practices to ensure there are no impacts to water quality from construction activity.

Notes:

- Erosion and sediment control best management practices would be utilized during construction to protect the unnamed waterway. All disturbed soils would be stabilized and reseeded upon project completion.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: A wetland is located adjacent to the unnamed tributary to Euchre Creek, approximately 80 feet east of structure 39/5. The wetland boundary would be identified in the field prior to ground disturbance, and no ground disturbance, excavation, or fill, would be allowed within the wetland boundary.

Notes:

- Erosion and sediment control best management practices would be utilized during construction to protect the wetland. All disturbed soils would be stabilized and reseeded upon project completion.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No excavation would occur at depths that would intersect groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is not located in any specially-designated areas. Current land use, which consists of rural residential, agricultural, and timber lands, along with high-voltage transmission corridor, would not be impacted by the proposed project.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would alter the immediate local landscape by cutting into the existing, vegetated hillside to build the landing. However, disturbed soils would be stabilized and seeded upon project completion to promote revegetation. The existing visual profile, which consists of vegetation, trees, and the transmission corridor, would not be significantly altered.

Notes:

- Upon project completion, disturbed soils would be reseeded with a native erosion control seed mix and monitored for revegetation.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would have limited, temporary impacts to air quality due to heavy equipment operation and traffic related to the construction project. However, impacts would be insignificant, and the project is located in a remote area that generally does not have background air quality problems.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would have limited, temporary impacts to noise related to heavy equipment operations. However, construction activity would occur during daylight hours, when potential impacts to people and wildlife would be minimized, and the project is located in a fairly remote area, without many human receptors.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A safe, reliable high voltage transmission system is a human health and safety issue. The project would replace the damaged wood pole structure 39/5 to safely address an urgent risk to the Bandon-Rogue No. 1 transmission line. All BPA and BPA-contractor work supporting the project would proceed following established safety practices and guidelines.

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 transmission line maintenance foreman, access road engineers, environmental representatives, and realty representatives have discussed proposed project activities with the landowner, and would continue to coordinate activities with the landowner through construction and into post-construction revegetation monitoring.

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

Signed: /s/ Aaron Siemers

Aaron Siemers

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: March 20, 2023