

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Cardwell-Cowlitz No 1 Transmission Tower Modifications (*Update to previous CX issued on October 2, 2023*)

Project No.: WA 5745-N0903

Project Manager: Jay Largo, TPCV-TPP-4

Location: Cowlitz, WA

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

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to modify transmission structures 7/3 to 7/7 on the 115-kilovolt (kV) Cardwell-Cowlitz No. 1 transmission line in Cowlitz County, WA. BPA's transmission structure modifications would support the Port of Longview's proposed expansion to their existing industrial railroad corridor under BPA's transmission right-of-way easement. This CX has been updated to include the addition of existing access road improvements to the Cardwell-Cowlitz-1 structure 7/6.

The proposed action would include:

- The removal of two H-frame wood pole structures (structure 7/6 and 7/7). After removal, the resulting holes would be filled and capped with crushed 1-1/4 inch gravel for proper drainage.
- The installation of a new 100-foot-tall H-frame wood pole structure 7/7 and associated hardware approximately 300 feet north of removed 7/6 structure and approximately 300 feet south of removed 7/7 structure. The new poles would be buried approximately 10 feet below ground within a 3-foot by 10-foot metal culvert and filled with 1-1/4 inch crushed rock for proper drainage.
- The modification of suspension structure 7/3 to a dead-end structure by adding one additional 60-foot-tall dead-end support pole approximately 14 feet west of structure 7/3. On the existing structure, BPA would add new guy lines, x-braces, and dead-end hardware to dead-end the conductors on both sides of the structure. The new dead-end support pole would be buried approximately 10 feet below ground within a 3-foot by 10-foot metal culvert and filled with 1-1/4 inch crushed rock for proper drainage. The existing wood poles of structure 7/3 would remain in place.

- Perform drake conductor work between Cardwell-Cowlitz-1 structures 7/3 and 7/8.
- The installation of new suspension hardware on existing structures 7/4, 7/5, and 7/8.

General equipment used for the installation of the new wood pole structures and line work would include line trucks, bucket trucks, excavator, auger truck, dump truck, light duty vehicles, and reeling equipment.

Industrial wetland mats would be placed at three locations (structures 7/6, 7/7 & 7/8) to protect underlying wetlands and sedimentation from potential damage due to use of rubber tired or tracked equipment.

Improvements to the access road leading to structure 7/6 would include adding 3/4 inch to 1-1/4 inch crushed rock on top of the existing access road prism located within BPA's transmission right-of-way easement.

All work pertaining to the BPA's work for the Cardwell-Cowlitz No. 1 Tower Modifications would be paid for by the Port of Longview's Industrial Rail Corridor Expansion Project.

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/ Sylas Daughtrey

Sylas Daughtrey
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
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: Cardwell-Cowlitz No. 1 Transmission Tower Modification (*Update to previous CX issued on October 2, 2023*)

Project Site Description

The project site is on BPA's Cardwell-Cowlitz No. 1 115-kV transmission line right-of-way easement on properties owned by Cowlitz Public Utility District No. 1 (Cowlitz PUD) and The Port of Longview in Cowlitz County, WA (Township 7N, Range 2W, Section 11).

The project area is approximately 0.4 miles north of the Cowlitz River and 1.5 miles east of the Columbia River. The majority of the project site consists of heavily disturbed lands, intersected with a rail yard, paved and graveled access roads, and the decommissioned Tennant Way Landfill located on the west side of BPA's transmission line right-of-way between structures 7/3 and 7/6 (structures 7/7-7/8 are located just north of the former landfill boundary). The project site is surrounded by a large industrial timber mill, log pond, the Port of Longview rail yard, the decommissioned Tennant Way Landfill and its remaining structures, and Washington State highway 432. Multiple wetlands and floodplain areas occur within the general vicinity of the project area. The area consists of low-growing native and non-native grasses and shrubs.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work does not include any ground-disturbing activities that would affect cultural or historic resources. BPA cultural resource review has stated the area of proposed construction has seen substantial disturbance and it is highly unlikely archaeological resources would be identified. In the event that any archaeological material is encountered during construction, the environmental lead would immediately be notified and work halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed.

BPA consulted with the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), Cowlitz Indian Tribe, and Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde regarding the project on August 21, 2023. In its letter, BPA summarized previous cultural resources investigations that overlapped the Area of Potential Effects (APE); no archaeological resources were identified and the project area has been substantially disturbed such that there is a low probability for these types of resources. However, the transmission line was energized in 1952 and is considered a historic property. As part of its consultation letter, BPA determined that the structure replacements would not adversely impact the integrity of the historic transmission line and the project would have no adverse effect on historic properties. DAHP provided a letter of concurrence dated August 22, 2023. No additional responses were received within 30 days.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor impacts to soils are anticipated from BPA's access as well as the removal and replacement of the two pole transmission line structure and dead-end pole structure modifications. The maximum depth of disturbance would be 10 feet deep and 3 feet wide for proposed pole installation. The new poles would be installed near the existing poles and an auger would be used to excavate the holes for the new pole locations. The area of ground-disturbing activities would take place in and around previously-disturbed areas. These previously-disturbed areas include graveled, paved, and/or compacted soils. The project site area is located on and near a decommissioned construction material landfill. Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be implemented during construction and following construction. Temporarily disturbed soils would stabilize as vegetation is reestablished following completion of construction.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no special-status plant species present within the project area. BPA determined that the proposed action would have no effect on plant species protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). Industrial wetland mats would be used for site specific access resulting in minor impacts to existing upland and wetland vegetation resulting from BPA's work on the transmission line structures and access to the project area. Temporarily disturbed areas would be stabilized and seeded following construction, with wetland areas seeded with a site-specific wetland seed mix.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no special-status wildlife species documented within a half-mile of the project area, and no suitable special-status species habitat is present. BPA determined that the proposed action would have no effect on wildlife species protected under the federal ESA. The construction and work area is located within well-established areas outside critical habitat. The proposed action may temporarily increase disturbance for locally non-sensitive wildlife species resulting from noise and human presence, but it is anticipated that wildlife would distribute to adjacent habitats and that noise disturbance would be consistent with ongoing operations surrounding the construction area.

Given the lack of documented species presence, lack of habitat, and minimal impacts to the existing land use and cover, the proposed action would have no effect on special-status species or habitat.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Special-status fish species found in the Columbia River (bull trout, Chinook, chum, coho, and steelhead) would not be impacted by the project. No in-water work is proposed for this project and no riparian vegetation would be impacted. BMPs would be implemented to prevent sedimentation from reaching nearby waterbodies.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The general area surrounding the Cardwell-Cowlitz No. 1 transmission line project area contains multiple delineated wetlands. The proposed replacement of two existing wood pole structures (7/7 and 7/8) would occur in upland areas with surrounding wetlands. BMPs would be implemented throughout the project to ensure localized soil disturbance does not cause sedimentation issues into any wetlands. Port of Longview has obtained a Section 404 of the Clean Water Act permit authorization (NWS-2021-483) for permanent fill to wetlands of 0.001 acre and temporary impacts during construction. The Port of Longview would implement all mitigation measures stipulated under the permit authorization. However, BPA's proposed tower modifications would have no permanent impact to wetlands. Disturbed wetland areas would be seeded with a site-specific wetland seed mix.

Notes:

- Deployment of wetland mats near structures 7/6, 7/7, and 7/8 to prevent vehicle rutting as well as any potential and or temporary wetland impacts.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area would require limited soil excavation for structure footings and guy anchors. Excavation would not occur in wetland areas but could reach depths to groundwater given the proximity of wetlands. Spill prevention measures would be utilized during construction activities to reduce the potential for inadvertent spills of hazardous materials that could contaminate groundwater or aquifers. The project would have no permanent impact on groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed BPA construction would not result in any land use change, and the project site is not located in a specially-designated area.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be a minimal change to visual quality, and the visual changes would be consistent with the general surroundings of the existing transmission line corridor.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A minor amount of vehicle emissions and dust may occur temporarily during BPA's replacement of the two transmission line structures within the project area. There would be no substantial changes to air quality during or after construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increases in noise may occur during daylight hours as a result of the proposed project. No ongoing noise increase is expected for this area as a result of this project.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All standard safety protocols would be followed during project activities to minimize risks to construction workers. No impacts to human health and safety are anticipated to result from this project.

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: The project is located on BPA's right-of-way easement, and the Port of Longview would notify any other easement holders on the Port of Longview property, if required. The Port of Longview would be responsible for any adjacent landowner notification, involvement, or coordination, if required.

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

Signed: /s/ Sylas Daughtrey November 1, 2023
Sylas Daughtrey Date
Environmental Protection Specialist