

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Driscoll-Naselle Access Road Improvement Project

**Project No.:** P05777

**Project Manager:** Donna Martin - TELF-TPP-3

**Location:** Wahkiakum County, Washington

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

## **Description of the Proposed Action:**

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to repair and improve access roads along the Driscoll-Naselle 115-kV No. 1 transmission line between structures 17/2-18/3.

The proposed project would improve and reconstruct approximately 2.2 miles of access roads. The work would include general improvements of grading and rocking on the existing access road system along with clearing of approximately 0.2 mile of slide debris, installation of about 0.25 mile of geotextile fabric to add future stability to slide prone areas, installation of 12 cross-drain culverts and reconstruction of a ford on high elevation ephemeral drainages, construction of a drain dip, and approximately one mile of ditch cleaning and reestablishment. Also included in the work would be recontouring and rocking of five transmission structure landings approximately 1,000 square-foot each, construction of four vehicle pullouts approximately 750 square-foot each, and approximately 0.5 mile of roadway mowing.

An approximately 0.7 acre area, near the entrance point of the proposed project area and bordering both sides of an existing access road, has been identified for use as a material storage site. Additionally an approximately 0.4 acre site along the Right-of-Way (ROW) directly Ahead-on-Line (AOL) of structure 17/4 has been identified for a slide debris disposal site.

General equipment used for this type of work includes: excavator, loader, grader, vibratory roller, dump truck, flat-bed tractor-trailer, and mower/vegetation trimmer.

**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/ Laura Roberts

Laura Roberts  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange                      Date  
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:** Driscoll-Naselle Access Road Improvement Project

## **Project Site Description**

The proposed Driscoll-Naselle Access Road Improvement Project would occur in Wahkiakum County, Washington. The project is located on private land in Township 9 North, Range 6 West, Sections 4, 9, and 10. The project would occur on existing access roads leading to, adjacent to, and within the transmission line ROW. The project area is located downslope of Hogan Hills ridge (approximately 1,000 feet above sea level). The area is made up of low elevation pasture lands and rocky ledges flanked by second-growth forest. Wilson Creek occurs near the county road at the entrance point of the proposed project area. Additionally, ephemeral drainages occur along the steep slopes below Hogan Hills ridge.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

**Explanation:** BPA initiated consultation with the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Shoalwater Bay Tribe, on August 29, 2023. The DAHP concurred with the Area of Potential Effect (APE) via a letter dated April 20, 2023. A BPA archaeologist subsequently completed an archaeological field investigation and summary report for the project; no significant cultural resources were identified. BPA sent a **no historic properties affected** determination letter to the consulting parties on December 13, 2023. DAHP provided a letter of concurrence dated December 13, 2023. No additional responses were received within 30 days

#### **Notes:**

- BPA's Post-Review Discovery Procedures would be included as a condition of the construction package.
- Contractors would be required to stay on designated access road and within material storage site along valley floor. The approved material storage site must be marked with fencing to restrict project activities to the APE.
- A sensitive area is close to the Area of Potential Effects. Barbed wire farm fencing currently offers protection to this area, and contractors would not be permitted to alter or cross this fence. If the fence is removed by the landowner, the contractor would install fencing to prevent access to the sensitive area.

## 2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA conducted geotechnical analysis of the slide areas to inform design and achieve long-term stability of access roads at those locations. Ground disturbing activities would predominantly occur in the existing access road easement and transmission line ROW. New ground disturbance would occur at the slide debris deposition site AOL of 17/4 (approximately 0.4 acre), at the material storage site (approximately 0.7 acre), and at the four vehicle pullout locations (approximately 750 square feet each). Appropriate Best Management Practices (BMP) would be implemented prior to initiating ground disturbing activities and all unrocked disturbed areas would be stabilized and seeded.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Federal/state special-status plant species or habitats present in the project area. Approximately 0.11 acre of temporary disturbance to plants would result from the slide debris deposition site and from the use of the material storage site. Approximately 3,000 square feet of new permanent vegetation removal would result from the construction of four vehicle pullouts. Appropriate BMPs would be implemented prior to initiating ground disturbing activities and unrocked disturbed areas would be stabilized and seeded.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project may have temporary noise and disturbance impacts to local wildlife species related to construction equipment noise and human presence. There are no Federal/state special-status wildlife species or habitats 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: Lower Columbia River coho, Chinook and steelhead, and Columbia River chum, all Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) listed Threatened species, are present or presumed present within Wilson Creek. Wilson Creek is also designated Critical Habitat for coho and Chinook. An existing bridge crossing Wilson Creek would be used by construction equipment for the duration of the project and grading and rocking would occur up to the bridge's approaches. BPA submitted an action notification under its *Endangered Species Act Section 7 Programmatic Conference and Biological Opinion and Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Essential Fish Habitat Consultation for Standard Local Operating Procedures for Endangered Species to Administer Maintenance or Rebuild Projects for Transmission Line and Road Access Actions Authorized or Carried Out by the Bonneville Power Administration in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho* (SLOPES WCR-2014-1600) on 1/17/2024. The proposed work is a "No Approval" action requiring BPA notification only to National Marine Fisheries to be covered for incidental take under SLOPES WCR-2014-1600.

Slide debris would be removed, 12 cross-drain culverts would be installed and a ford would be reconstructed on high elevation ephemeral drainages which would reduce the potential for sediment runoff and could have beneficial long-term effects on nearby water quality. Work is scheduled to occur during the dry season and work areas drain to vegetated buffers, therefore there would be no impact to water bodies or floodplains.

Notes:

- Although no in-water work in Wilson Creek is required for the project, work would be conducted during the in-water work window (July 15 - September 15) to minimize noise and visual impacts to ESA listed species from construction bridge use and from road improvements in the vicinity of the bridge.

## **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands within the proposed project area. The proposed project would not impact these resources.

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to groundwater or aquifers are anticipated as the proposed project ground disturbance would not be deep enough to penetrate groundwater.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change in land use or specially-designated areas as a result of the project.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have minor impacts to visual quality. The few areas of new ground disturbance and the proposed access road improvements would be consistent with the existing transmission line corridor.

## **10. Air Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small amount of equipment emissions and dust may occur temporarily during construction.

## **11. Noise**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours as a result of the proposed project. No ongoing noise increase is expected as a result of this project.

## **12. Human Health and Safety**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to human health and safety are anticipated to result from the 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: BPA Realty is in coordination with 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/ Laura Roberts

Laura Roberts

Environmental Protection Specialist

01/25/2024

Date