

Categorical Exclusion Determination
Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Ashe – Marion No. 2 Urgent Transmission Line Repair

PP&A No.: 4597

Project Manager: Donna Martin – TEPF-TPP-3

Location: Wasco County, Oregon

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

Description of the Proposed Action: The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to repair the span of conductor on the Ashe – Marion No. 2 500 kV transmission line from structure 150/1 to structure 150/2 which has become twisted together. The proposed work is necessary to ensure power grid reliability and maintain public safety for vehicle traffic beneath the conductor.

Accessing the span of line to perform the repair would require construction of approximately 1,500 linear feet of access road in the existing right-of-way and three new landings with dimensions of 30 feet by 60 feet. Additionally, improvements would occur for approximately 1,200 linear feet of existing access roads, which would include grading and compacting existing road surface as well as hauling, placing, and shaping of additional crushed rock. General equipment used for this type of road work includes: graders, rollers, bull-dozers, and dump trucks. The access road improvements would preserve and repair the existing road, maintain roadway safety, and manage storm water run-off.

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/ Michelle Colletti

Michelle Colletti
Physical Scientist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Date: January 20, 2021

Sarah T. Biegel
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: Ashe – Marion No. 2 Urgent Transmission Line Repair

Project Site Description

The project activities would be conducted in the existing BPA right-of-way and access roads along the Ashe – Marion No. 2 corridor from structure 150/1 to 150/2. The site is located on private land adjacent to the Warm Springs Reservation. Nearby land uses are primarily rural residential and agricultural. Vegetation within the right-of-way corridor is maintained as a low-growing plant community of mainly grasses and small shrubs. Paquet Gulch is located approximately 500 feet from the proposed work area.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The BPA contract archaeologist completed background research and an intensive field survey of the area of potential effect (APE) and determined the project actions would result in No Adverse Effect to Historic Properties. One previously recorded archaeological resource, 35WS0125, was located just outside of the APE. Upon field survey and subsurface testing, the boundaries of 35WS0125 were expanded into the APE.

Additionally, two pre-contact isolates were identified; one of which was recommended as not eligible for listing on to the National Register of Historic Properties (NRHP), the other was recommended as unevaluated and that it be avoided during construction.

In addition to the avoidance of one of the isolates (AsheMarion-TC-ISO-01), it is recommended that all construction within the western portion of the APE be monitored by an archaeologist so as to document any cultural resources that are uncovered during construction.

The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon concurred with the determination on January 15, 2020, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office concurred on January 20, 2020.

Should any cultural resources be inadvertently discovered during the construction in the eastern portion of the APE, then all project work must stop, and the Cultural Resources Lead and Environmental Projection Specialist should be notified immediately. No additional review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act is required for this action at this time.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Localized soil disturbance would occur during access road construction activities. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized as necessary.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status plants are present. Project activities would not substantially alter existing plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status species were identified within the project area. Project activities would temporarily disturb local wildlife during construction, but the disturbance would be limited to the already impacted transmission line right-of-way and would not substantially alter the long-term footprint or operational noise of the transmission line; therefore, wildlife and associated habitat would not be affected in the long term.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No in-water work is proposed for this project. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized to ensure sediment and other contaminants do not enter bodies of water; therefore, water bodies, floodplains, and fish would not be affected by the proposed project activities.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: None present in the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities are not expected to impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not result in permanent changes or impacts to land use.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be performed within existing transmission system rights-of-way and access road.

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 would occur during daylight hours.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA personnel would develop a site-specific health and safety plan to address any hazards during the proposed work. The proposed work is necessary to ensure ongoing safe and reliable operation of the transmission system and to maintain power delivery in the region.

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 would notify and coordinate with landowners in advance of the proposed project. A meeting with landowners was conducted in January 2021 to review the proposed design and provide feedback.

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

Signed: /s/ Michelle Colletti Date: January 20, 2021
Michelle Colletti, EPR-4
Physical Scientist