

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** North Bonneville-Troutdale No. 2 Insulator Replacement

**PP&A No.:** 3760

**Project Manager:** Andrew Young, TEPL-TPP-1

**Location:** Multnomah, OR; Clark and Skamania, WA

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

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to replace insulators, remedy impairments, improve access roads, and install fall protection along the North Bonneville - Troutdale No. 2 230 kV transmission line within BPA's Longview District.

Insulators, strings of bell shaped ceramic discs, would be replaced along the North Bonneville - Troutdale No. 2 transmission line. Using a line truck with helicopter support, if preferable, linemen would access transmission towers and change out insulators.

BPA is also proposing to remedy an impairment on the transmission line. An impairment is an area where the distance from the conductor to the ground surface is inadequate, per National Electrical Safety Code (NESC) standards, resulting in a threat to line reliability and posing a risk to public health and safety. At one location, excavation of the existing ground surface would be required and would consist of less than 0.25 acres of surface area and approximately 60 cubic yards of soil in total. Excavated soil would be distributed within the right-of-way (ROW), where it would be stabilized and seeded.

In order to provide a safe work environment, BPA is proposing to improve approximately 10 miles of existing roads, reconstruct approximately 7 miles of existing roads, and construct approximately 1,125 feet of new roads within the existing ROW. Approximately 40 miles of roads would be used with no improvement. Construct or repair access roads. Proposed road work would cover approximately 20 miles of roads and include: blading, shaping, grading, brushing, and placing surface rock on new and existing road prisms. In addition to the proposed road improvements, work would include the installation of approximately three leveled and rocked landing areas, consisting of approximately 0.3 acres of disturbance. General equipment used for this type of landing work includes: graders, rollers, bull-dozers, brush hogs, excavators, and dump trucks.

In addition, BPA would install a cable safety system on the vertical climbing path of each transmission tower. The cable system would be connected to the tower with a series of brackets approximately every 10 feet and a top and bottom anchor. Once installed, workers would use the system when climbing the tower by attaching their harness to a specialized pulley which allows them to glide along the safety cable as they climb. Installation would require a line truck and two-to-three workers in the tower and one-to-two workers on the ground.

Any storage or work areas, including helicopter landing zones, would be environmentally reviewed prior to use on the 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/ Jonnel Deacon*

Jonnel Deacon

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

*/s/ Katey Grange*

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: May 25, 2022

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:** North Bonneville-Troutdale No. 2 Insulator Replacement

## **Project Site Description**

The project runs between BPA's North Bonneville Substation in Skamania County, WA and BPA's Troutdale Substation in Multnomah County, OR along the North Bonneville-Troutdale No. 2 transmission line. It includes areas of rural forest land, urban housing, and a small industrial area. The eastern portion of the project is within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area in lands designated as (GMA) F-1a, (GMA) F-3(20), (GMA) Public Rec, (GMA) R-10, (GMA) Urban Areas, (SMA) Forest, (SMA) Open Space and, (SMA) Public. The eastern portion is characterized by steep, rocky slopes and dense forests. The western portion of the project is flatter terrain, more developed land, and urban housing. The project includes lands managed by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources and United States Forest Service. Both have been coordinated with in advance of the proposed project.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA conducted background research utilizing the Washington DAHP's online Washington Information System for Architectural and Archaeological Records Data (WISAARD) database followed by an intensive field survey of the Area of Potential Effects (APE). Background research conducted by HRA indicated that 87 previous cultural resource surveys have been conducted within one mile of the APE, 21 of which were conducted within the APE itself. Additionally, 48 previously recorded archaeological resources were identified within one mile of the APE, seven of which are located within the APE. As a result of the archaeological survey all seven previously-recorded cultural resources were revisited, three new archaeological resources were recorded, and seven historic BPA assets were determined eligible. Of the identified sites, only one (45SA0667), would need to be monitored for avoidance and would have traffic restrictions. All other sites would be avoided by the project or would have no adverse effect due to project actions. BPA has determined that the project would result in no adverse effect to cultural resources, provided 45SA0667 is avoided and monitored. DAHP concurred on January 27th, 2022 (log number 2021-04-02292-BPA) and the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area concurred on February 18th, 2022. No other consulting parties responded within 30 days of consultation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The majority of the work would occur from in the existing road prism, where a road-base of rock already exists. In those areas where there would be ground disturbance (such as the impairment ground excavation area), standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized as necessary to prevent erosion and disturbed areas would be stabilized with mulch and a native seed.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The majority of the project would occur on existing BPA access road footprint. However, some new landings would be installed, and temporary impacts to plants would occur due to construction activity (vegetation clearing and grubbing), during access road blading and especially at locations such as turn-arounds and staging areas. There are no Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed plant species in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA reviewed the project and potential effects to ESA-listed species in the project area. BPA made a determination that the project would have “No Effect” to all listed and sensitive species in the surrounding area. Common wildlife impacts such as temporary disturbance could be possible, but wildlife would be expected to move to adjacent habitat during the temporary disturbance.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA reviewed the project and determined that no in water work within a water of the U.S. would take place. All ground disturbance would be located more than 250 feet from any water of the U.S. Soil erosion BMPs would prevent sediment from entering any waterbodies within the project area.

### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA reviewed the project and identified two wetlands; one near structure 5/3 and one near structure 16/1. No ground disturbing work would occur near these wetlands. Instead, temporary wetland mats would be used to access project work areas. Any access would be left as is and not be improved in any way.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No excavation or other project work would be at a depth or location that would potentially impact groundwater or aquifers.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is located within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA). All work would be performed within the ROW or on existing access roads and

land use would not change as a result of project activities. BPA coordinated with the USFS CRGNSA office on May 11, 2021. BPA received a response from the CRGNSA on May 26, 2021 confirming compliance. No recreational impacts would be expected as a result of the project.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work would be consistent with the visual character of the existing road prism and access roads. A small amount of dirt would be excavated and spread nearby and reseeded with native vegetation, similar to the surrounding area. Replaced insulators as well as lathways would be visually consistent with the existing structures and surrounding areas.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have no substantial impacts on air quality; however a small amount of vehicle emissions and dust may occur during construction.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours. The operational noise of the transmission line would not change.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A health and safety plan would be prepared and submitted to the BPA safety office prior to construction. Project activities would increase safety for crews accessing transmission lines.

### **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: All activities have been coordinated with landowners, including Washington State Department of Natural Resources, United States Forest Service Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area office.

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

Signed: /s/ Jonnel Deacon

Jonnel Deacon – EPR-4  
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: May 25, 2022