

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Hood River-The Dalles No. 1 Access Road Improvements

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

**Location:** Hood River County, Oregon

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B1.3 Routine maintenance; B1.13 Pathways, short access roads, and rail lines

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to improve an existing access road and to relocate a spur road that leads to a transmission structure on the Hood River-The Dalles No. 1 transmission line. Approximately 0.7 miles of road would be graded to remove ruts and new rock would then be added to the road prism. Six waterbars would be installed to route water drainage off of the roadway. An additional 0.1 miles of existing access road would be reconstructed. The existing spur road leading to structure 3/1 in the right-of-way would be relocated to the southeast because a house is being constructed on the parcel. Approximately 0.1 miles of a new cut and fill access road would be built and two waterbars would be constructed on this new road. Excavated top soil for the new spur road would be stockpiled and redistributed on site post construction. A gate would be installed at the entrance to the new spur road to prevent unauthorized access. A 30-foot by 40-foot landing would be added at the base of the structure, to improve access for maintenance activities.

BPA also proposes to acquire easement rights for two segments of these roads, access roads 003-01-2 and 002-05-1.

**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/ Carol Leiter for

Beth Belanger

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange

July 21, 2022

Katey C. Grange

Date

NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment: 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: Hood River-The Dalles No. 1 Access Road Improvements**

### **Project Site Description**

The project location is just over one mile southeast of Hood River city limits in Hood River County, Oregon. The legal description is Section 6, Township 2 North, Range 11 East. Much of the surrounding area consists of orchards and rural residential housing; however, a housing subdivision is planned in the vicinity of the transmission right-of-way where the new spur road is proposed. Privately-owned timberland to the north and northwest is in various stages of forest succession for timber production.

The majority of the road improvement work is on a private residential road that is forested, with Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) trees being the dominant species and snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*) as the main understory species. The proposed road reconstruction is within an area that was recently clearcut. The new spur road is in oak woodland habitat, with small native oak trees (*Quercus garryana*), poison oak (*Toxicodendron diversilobum*), balsam root (*Balsamorhiza careyana*), and native forbs (*Achillia millefolium*, *Fritillaria pudica*, *Lithophragma parviflorum*, *Olsynium douglasii*).

There are no wetlands or waterbodies in, or within close proximity, to the project area. An unnamed intermittent stream is located about 0.07 miles south of the spur road relocation.

The road improvements and reconstruction portion of the project is within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA), within large-scale agricultural and commercial forest land use designations. The new access road would not be located within the CRGNSA boundaries.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On August 30, 2021, BPA initiated Section 106 consultation with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation Nez Perce Tribe, USFS Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA) office, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). A BPA archaeologist completed an archaeological survey and submitted a report and no adverse effect determination to the consulting parties on June 22, 2022. The CRGNSA archaeologist reviewed the draft report on June 17, 2022 and concurred with BPA's determination [ahead of formal determination letters being sent to the other consulting parties](#). To date, no other responses have been received.

## 2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: The existing privately owned access road has not been regularly maintained and is deeply rutted in some locations. The proposed road improvements on this road would eliminate the current erosion that occurs during precipitation events due to road ruts, bare soils and the steep grade.

The new spur road would be constructed on a slope and would require cut and fill of soils.

Notes:

- Erosion control best management practices, including straw wattles and silt fencing, would be implemented. Disturbed areas would be stabilized and re-seeded. Excess soils would be redistributed in flat, upland areas that were included in the environmental review or disposed of at an off-site location.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project area does not contain Federal or state special-status species. BPA has assessed the area for CRGNSA sensitive flora and determined that there are no occurrences of sensitive species that would be impacted by the project. However, part of the project would occur in an oak woodland habitat, which is a habitat type identified as a conservation concern by the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife and the Oregon Conservation Strategy. But the new spur road location was selected to avoid removal of mature oak trees. Some small diameter, shrub sized oak trees would be removed for the project.

Notes:

- Excavated top soil for the new spur road would be stockpiled and redistributed post construction to maintain the existing seedbank at the location.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Federal or state special-status species that would be impacted by the project. BPA has assessed the area for CRGNSA sensitive wildlife and determined that the project is unlikely to impact sensitive species. Deer and elk are known to occupy the area and construction noise may temporarily displace these and other species from foraging in the area; however, there are vast expanses of undeveloped lands in the area that could be utilized by these species.

Construction would occur after migratory bird nesting season. As mentioned above, part of the project would take place in an oak woodland; however, no large diameter trees with nest cavities would be removed.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is not in, or near, water bodies, floodplains or fish habitat. Erosion control best management practices would be implemented to prevent sedimentation of any lower elevation waterways.

## 6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is not in, or near, any wetlands.

## 7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project location is over 40 miles away from the nearest EPA Region 10 sole source aquifer. Groundwater would not be impacted by the project.

## 8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project actions would not require a CRGNSA management plan consistency review as the project would support BPA to operate, maintain and modify existing transmission facilities within the CRGNSA. Project information was submitted to the U.S. Forest Service CRGNSA office on May 13, 2022. To date, no responses have been received.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not change the overall visual quality of the location. The new spur road to the existing transmission structure would replace an existing spur road and would not create a substantial change to the viewshed.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: A temporary increase in fugitive dust and vehicle emissions would occur during construction.

Notes: A water truck would be onsite to wet surfaces to decrease dust during construction.

## 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

Explanation: During project activities, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Project activities would not impact human health or safety.

## **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 would notify landowners prior project implementation.

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

Signed: /s/ Carol Leiter for July 21, 2022  
Beth Belanger, ECT-4 Date  
Environmental Protection Specialist