

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Pilot Butte-LaPine, Redmond District, Access Road Maintenance

Project No.: 3862

Project Manager: Randall Browning TELF-TPP-3 Darin Bowman TELF-TPP-3

Location: Deschutes County, Oregon

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

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to perform routine road maintenance, repair, and improvements on the Pilot Butte-LaPine Access Road. The proposed work is necessary to maintain or repair existing infrastructure and roadway safety. The proposed project includes the following features:

- Existing access road improvements (38,861 linear feet);
- Existing access road reconstruction (2,804 linear feet);
- New construction landing (5,000 square feet);
- 2 waterbars;
- 4 replacement gates.

The project would involve the following actions: laying gravel, installing 2 rock water bars and 1 replacement gate, and installing a new construction landing. The roadway improvements would occur within the existing road prism, and the construction of the proposed new 5,000 sq. ft. landing would be located at the beginning of the proposed new roadway reconstruction at operating mile 3. No in-water work would be conducted. The above described road maintenance activities are proposed to be conducted during 2018.

If prior to or during construction activities the proposed action may result in adverse impacts to resources that are not described within this categorical exclusion, coordination with the appropriate agencies and a reevaluation of effects may be warranted.

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, July 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/ John Wiley

John Wiley

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: April 27, 2018

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Checklist

This checklist documents environmental considerations for the proposed work and explains why the work 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: Pilot Butte-LaPine No 1., Redmond District, Access Road Maintenance

Project Site Description

Biologists from Pacific Habitat Services conducted a site visit on October 14, 2016, to evaluate site conditions and the surrounding environment. The proposed project is located south of the City of Bend in rural Deschutes County, OR. Land ownership within the project area includes U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands and privately-held property. Land use within the project vicinity includes open space, forested lands, rural residential properties and the BPA ROW. The approximate site elevation is between 3,600 and 4,700 feet above sea level. The project is located in high desert sagebrush (*Artemesia* spp)/bunchgrass habitat as well as ponderosa pine (*Pinus ponderosa*)-dominated woodlands at higher elevations.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> AINW archaeologists conducted the fieldwork for the proposed Pilot Butte-La Pine No. 1 Transmission Line Access Road project between July 24 and 27, 2017. The cultural resource survey consisted of a records review and pedestrian survey of the APE. Project activities and any disturbance resulting from the project will avoid the NRHP-eligible Pilot Butte-La Pine No. 1 transmission line; the line will not be impacted by the proposed undertaking. No additional historic-period or pre-contact cultural material was encountered. Given that all ground disturbance resulting from the work will take place within the existing road prism, and in conjunction with the results of the records review and pedestrian survey, BPA has determined that the project will have "No Adverse Effect" to historic properties. OR SHPO concurred with BPA's no adverse effect determination on April 9, 2018. No additional archaeological work is recommended. In the event that archaeological or historical materials are discovered during work activities, work in the immediate vicinity would stop, the area would be secured, and the SHPO and the environmental project lead would be notified.		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Explanation:

The work includes working within the existing road prism to improve drainage on the road surface by reconstructing and improving the existing access road infrastructure by laying gravel, installing two rock water bars and installing a new landing site. The proposed roadway improvements would likely conserve soil resources by reducing ponding and soil erosion within the roadway. Any new ground

disturbance such as that associated with the proposed new landings would be reseeded with a native seed mix immediately following construction to reduce soil erosion. The water bars or drain dips would not connect to other aquatic resources. No prime or unique farmlands would be affected. Therefore, the proposed action would have limited impacts to geology and soils.

3. **Plants** (including federal/state special-status species)



Explanation:

Vegetation in the work area is divided into three distinct zones; the area within privately held property at the northern edge of the work area is composed of sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp), yellow rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*), and native bunchgrasses intermixed with developed rural residential properties. The majority of the work area is within USFS held lands (Newberry National Volcanic Monument) within a densely forested ponderosa pine/antelope bitterbrush (*Purshia tridentata*)/bunchgrass community. This vegetation community is interspersed with large fields of historic volcanic flows which are still evident on the landscape. Vegetation within these areas is sparse, and volcanic rocks dominate the surface. Sparse vegetation has established within the roadway in some areas and would be cleared from the road prism where roadwork is proposed. No trees would be removed as a result of the work. No federally-listed or proposed listed plant species or their designated critical habitats under jurisdiction of the USFWS were documented to occur within the proposed work area, and no suitable habitat for federally-listed plant species were found to occur within the work area. No federally-listed plant species or their habitats were documented to occur within the vicinity or were observed during the field survey due to lack of suitable habitat. A Letter of No Effect has been completed to document compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and has been submitted under separate cover to BPA. Therefore, the proposed action would have no effect on special-status plant species and limited impacts to other native and non-native vegetation.

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



Explanation:

An official federally-listed species list was requested from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Information, Planning and Conservation database (IPaC) on January 18, 2018 (updated). Several federally-listed or proposed listed wildlife species or their designated critical habitats under jurisdiction of the USFWS are documented to occur or have the potential to occur in the region; however, no suitable habitat for special-status wildlife species was found to occur within the work area. The proposed work actions would mainly occur within the existing road prism and any impacts to non-listed wildlife species would be temporary in nature and limited to construction within the road prism. See the ESA Letter of No Effect for this work for further details. Therefore, the work would have no impacts to federally-listed wildlife and limited impacts to other wildlife species.

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



Explanation:

Paulina Creek and several unnamed seasonal ravines are located within the work area; however, no work is proposed within these areas. Several erosional rills have developed on the existing access road,

but they do not drain to other aquatic resources outside of the road prism. The work as proposed is exempt from Corps Section 404 and DSL permit applications. No federally-listed or proposed listed aquatic species or their designated critical habitats under jurisdiction of the USFWS are documented to occur or have the potential to occur within the work area and no suitable habitat for special-status aquatic species was found to occur within the work area. The work area is not within range of any species or designated critical habitat under jurisdiction of NMFS or USFWS. See the ESA Letter of No Effect for this work for further details. Therefore, the work would have no effect to waterbodies, floodplains, or fish.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation:

No wetlands are present in the work area or within at least 100 feet to either side of the existing road. No wetlands would be impacted by the proposed work. Therefore, the proposed action would have no impacts to wetlands.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation:

Groundwater and aquifers would not be impacted by the proposed work as the work does not include any groundwater withdraws or aquifer recharge areas. The proposed work is limited to shallow soils and previously-disturbed areas. There would be no impacts to groundwater or aquifers.

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



Explanation:

No change in land use is proposed as part of the work. No specially designated areas were identified within the work limits. The work would not result in changes or impacts to land use or specially designated areas.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation:

There are limited residences within visual range of the work limits. The proposed work feature is consistent with existing roads. There would be no impacts to visual resources.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation:

The proposed work is expected to reduce dust generation and improve air quality along the access road by covering exposed soils with a gravel surface layer. Minor vehicle emissions during construction would be temporary in duration.

11. Noise



Explanation:

Temporary construction noise during daylight hours is expected. Construction is expected to last less than four weeks. The current level of road use is not expected to change, and no operational noise increases are expected.

12. Human Health and Safety



Explanation:

The work 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 line and to maintain power delivery in the region. Work activities would not impact human health or safety.

Evaluation of Other Integral Elements

The proposed work would also meet conditions that are integral elements of the categorical exclusion. The work 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, if necessary:

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

The Access Road Engineer would contact adjacent and potentially affected landowners prior to work construction.

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

Signed: /s/ John Wiley
John Wiley EP-4
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: April 27, 2018