

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: L0360- Cougar-Thurston No.1 Impairments & Holden Creek Substation Interconnection

Project No.: P02248

Project Manager: Rasha Kroonen, TEP-TPP-1

Location: Lane County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance and B4.11 Electric Power Substations and Interconnection Facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to interconnect the Cougar-Thurston No. 1 115-kilovolt (kV) transmission line to Eugene Water and Electric Board's new Holden Creek Substation. To interconnect the substation, BPA would install a glue-laminated wood pole structure approximately 80 feet back-on-line from structure 28/1. BPA would then install conductor between structure 28/1 and the Holden Creek Substation, and between the Holden Creek Substation and the new laminated wood pole; the laminated wood pole would be connected to structure 27/9, which is the next structure back-on-line.

Once BPA has interconnected the Holden Creek Substation, the Cougar-Thurston transmission line (circuit) would become two separate transmission circuits named Cougar-Holden Creek and Holden Creek-Thurston. As part of the process to establish the two new transmission circuits, BPA evaluated them for impairments. An impairment is an area where the distance from the conductors to the ground surface is inadequate, per National Electrical Safety Code (NESC) standards, resulting in a threat to transmission reliability and a risk to public health and safety. BPA identified eight such impairments along the Cougar-Thurston transmission line (see Table 1 below). Seven of the impairments would be corrected by excavating soil beneath the conductors to lower the ground surface elevation and achieve the required clearance distance of 22 feet between the ground and conductors. Excavation of the seven impairments would result in removal of approximately 1,200 cubic yards of soil over a total area of approximately 1.3 acres. The excavated soil would either be hauled offsite for disposal or spread evenly along low lying portions of the right-of-way and seeded.

Table 1: Impairment Description

<i>Impairment #</i>	<i>Transmission Structure Span</i>	<i>Township, Range, Section</i>	<i>Correction Method</i>	<i>Ownership</i>
1	2/4-2/5	T16S, R5E, Sec. 19	Excavate Soil	Private
2	5/2-5/3	T16S, R4E, Sec. 26	Excavate Soil	National Forest
3	18/3-18/4	T17S, R2E, Sec. 2	Excavate Soil	Private
4	26/8-27/1	T17S, R1E, Sec. 10	Excavate Soil	Private
5	27/4-27/5	T17S, R1E, Sec. 16	Excavate Soil	Private
6	29/1-29/2	T17S, R1E, Sec. 8	Excavate Soil	Private
7	29/5-30/1	T17S, R1E, Sec. 7	Prop Structure	Private
8	35/3-35/4	T17S, R1W, Sec. 20	Excavate Soil	Private

One impairment would be corrected by installing a 75-foot tall H-frame wood-pole (prop) structure between structures 29/5 and 30/1. To create a level surface for the utility bucket trucks used to install the wood-pole structure, BPA would excavate approximately 150 cubic yard of soil to create a level worksite (i.e., landing) approximately 40 feet by 100 feet surrounding the new structure. As with the impairments, the excavated soil would either be hauled offsite for disposal or spread evenly along low lying portions of the right-of-way and seeded.

All work would be completed within the BPA transmission right-of-way using existing access roads and direction of travel routes. Equipment utilized may include a utility bucket truck, back hoe, dump trucks, and other heavy machinery. No access road improvements are proposed. However, two existing gates would be repaired or replaced.

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/ Justin Moffett

Justin Moffett

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: January 18, 2018

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: L0360- Cougar-Thurston No.1 Impairments & Holden Creek Substation Interconnection

Project Site Description

The proposed project site is existing transmission line right-of-way (ROW) that passes public (Willamette National Forest) and private forestland. Vegetation within the ROW consists primarily of pasture grasses, forbs, and shrubs.

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"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with BPA's determination of No Historic Properties Affected on January 12, 2018. BPA also consulted with the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, and the US Forest Service - Willamette National Forest. While the tribes and Forest Service did not comment on the project, the SHPO requested BPA implement the mitigation measures listed below. Implement an Inadvertent Discovery Protocol (IDP) in the event any archaeological material is encountered during project activities. Actions to be taken under the IDP include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Stopping work in the vicinity and immediately notifying the BPA environmental lead, BPA and Forest Service archaeologists, interested tribes, Oregon SHPO, and the appropriate local, state, and Federal agencies.✓ Implementing reasonable measures to protect the discovery site, including any appropriate stabilization or covering.✓ Taking reasonable steps to ensure the confidentiality of the discovery site, including restricting access.		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Soils in the project area are silt loam, and support grasses and other native and non-native plants. Excavations and ground clearing would be limited to a maximum depth of 2 feet in the transmission right-of-way. The work sites would be restored following excavation and the local topography would be regraded. Erosion control measures would be utilized during soil removal and the area would be revegetated with an appropriate seed mix following project completion. The impacted areas would be fertilized if necessary to reestablish vegetation and minimize erosion.</p>		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> No special-status species are present. Work is to be conducted in an existing transmission line right-of-way (ROW). Any disturbed areas would be seeded with a geographic- and climate-appropriate seed mix. To limit the introduction and spread of invasive weeds, all construction vehicles would be washed prior to entering the project site.</p>		

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



Explanation: No special-status species or designated habitat is present. All work would be performed in the transmission right-of-way.

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



Explanation: Project is not located near a stream or in a floodplain. Typical erosion control measures would be implemented to limit erosion and sedimentation, and no riparian habitat would be affected.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: No wetlands are present in the project area.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: No new wells or use of groundwater is proposed. The maximum depth of disturbance would be approximately 2 feet. Spill prevention measures would be present.

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



Explanation: The project area is located in areas utilized for commercial forestry operations. No special restrictions apply and no additional land use evaluation has occurred.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: All work would be completed within the existing transmission ROW. At two locations, new wood poles would be installed. However, since the area is already the location of the existing Cougar-Thurston No. 1 transmission line, installing new poles would have no measureable effect on the visual quality of the area. At seven locations, ground clearing and excavation would be conducted. The locations would be re-graded and restored as much as possible to pre-excavation conditions. The excavation locations would be seeded with an appropriate seed mix.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: The project would create temporary dust and vehicle emissions due to construction, but no significant impacts. A water truck would be employed if necessary to mitigate dust during construction.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: The project would create temporary noise due to construction activities, but no significant impacts are anticipated.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: The project would increase the safety and reliability of the transmission line by increasing clearance between the ground and conductors.

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, 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

Description: BPA staff have coordinated closely with the Forest Service regarding one impairment located on the Willamette National Forest that would be corrected by excavating excess soil. All other landowners will be notified once BPA determines the construction schedule.

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

Signed: /s/ Justin Moffett
Justin Moffett, ECT-4

Date: January 18, 2018