

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Bell TLM District FY18 Wood Pole Replacements in Idaho and Montana

Project No. (if applicable): 3921

Project Manager: Michael Wellner – TEPL-TPP-1

Location: Bonner and Boundary counties, Idaho; and Lincoln County, Montana

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 in-kind replacement of wood pole structures and associated structural/electrical components (e.g. cross arms, insulators, guy anchors, etc.) along several transmission lines. Replacement poles would be placed in existing holes following removal of current pole structures, and may be re-augered to assure proper depth placement. Minor maintenance along existing access road prisms and landings is scheduled to be performed where necessary to facilitate safe access. No unauthorized construction activities would occur in any water body including streams, ponds, or wetlands. Access road maintenance may include blading, shaping, rocking, and construction of waterbars and drain dips. Refer to the table below for project locations.

Transmission Line	Structure	TRS	County, State
Albeni Falls-Sand Creek No. 1	30/8	T58N R2W SEC35	Bonner, ID
Libby-Bonnars Ferry No. 1	48/2, 48/3	T33N R34W SEC17	Lincoln, MT
	50/7, 50/8, 51/1, 51/2	T61N R3E SEC3	Boundary, ID
	51/3, 51/4, 51/5, 51/6, 51/7, 52/1	T61N R3E SEC4	Boundary, ID
	52/3, 52/4	T62N R3E SEC33	Boundary, ID
	52/7	T62N R3E SEC32	Boundary, ID
	53/8, 54/6	T62N R3E SEC30	Boundary, ID
	62/3	T62N R1E SEC35	Boundary, ID

The proposed action would allow safe and timely access to the transmission lines which would help reduce outage times and maintain reliable power in the region. All work would be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA standards.

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/ Emma Reinemann

Emma Reinemann

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: July 16, 2019

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.

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Project Site Description

Proposed routine maintenance activities would be conducted along the Albeni Falls-Sandcreek No. 1 and Libby-Bonnars Ferry No. 1 transmission lines. Proposed maintenance activities would be performed in the existing transmission line right-of-ways and access road easements which are located in rural, non-developed areas and/or in rural, agricultural areas.

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></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A cultural survey was performed at all wood pole replacement locations, associated landings, and proposed road improvement locations. Report findings indicated there would be no adverse effect to historic properties by the undertaking. Montana SHPO concurred with BPA's No Adverse Effect determination for all proposed transmission line maintenance activities on June 18, 2019. Idaho SHPO concurred with BPA's No Adverse Effect determination for all proposed transmission line maintenance activities on July 2, 2019. Crews and equipment are to use existing access roads to and from each work site. Any access road maintenance performed would be limited to the existing road prism. Landing construction, if needed, would be limited to an area not to exceed 100-feet wide by 200-feet long at each structure proposed for replacement. In the event that archaeological or historical materials are discovered during project activities, work in the immediate vicinity must stop, the area secured, and the appropriate state SHPO office, BPA archaeologist, and the environmental project lead would be notified. 		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Localized soil disturbance would occur during wood pole replacements, landing improvements, and access road maintenance activities. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized as necessary.</p>		
3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> No Federal/state special-status plants present. Vegetation would be crushed and left in place, rather than bladed, where possible. Project activities would be limited to the already impacted right-of-way; therefore, plants and their habitat would not be affected.</p>		

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

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status species present. Project activities would be limited to the already impacted right-of-way and would not substantially alter the footprint or operational noise of the line; therefore, wildlife and associated habitat would not be affected.

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

Explanation: Listed and resident fish species may inhabit waterbodies that are within ½-mile of the various transmission lines. By implementing the following mitigation measures while working near water bodies, there would be “No Effect” on water bodies, floodplains, and fish:

- Trees and brush in riparian zones would be selectively cut to include only those that are in violation of current BPA ground to conductor clearance electrical safety standards.
- No ground-disturbing vegetation management methods would be implemented near water resources, thus minimizing the risk for soil erosion and sedimentation near water bodies.
- Erosion control devices would be utilized to reduce sedimentation of any nearby water resources.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: By implementing the following mitigation measures while working near or in wetlands there would be “No Effect” on wetlands.

- At locations adjacent to wetlands, erosion control devices would be utilized to prevent sedimentation of nearby wetlands.
- At locations within mapped wetlands, work would be performed during the dry season or wetland matting would be utilized to minimize disturbance.
- Landing work is not allowed at structures located in wetlands unless authorized by applicable Federal/state permits.
- Any excess soil generated from pole replacements would be disposed of in an upland area away from the wetland.
- Weed-free seed and straw would be used to mitigate any soil disturbed areas.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: No use of groundwater proposed. Maximum depth of disturbance would be 12 feet below ground surface.

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

Explanation: No change in land use. No specially-designated areas.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: All work would be performed within existing transmission line right-of-ways. Replacement of wood poles and associated components would be in-kind and replaced in the same location.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: Small amount of dust and vehicle emission during construction activity.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: Temporary construction noise during daylight hours. Operational noise of transmission line would not change.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: The proposed action would allow safe and timely access to the transmission line which would help reduce outage times and maintain reliable power 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, 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 Realty personnel would perform landowner notifications 30-days prior to project initiation and any concerns regarding proposed transmission line maintenance activities would be addressed.

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

Signed: /s/ Emma Reinemann
Emma Reinemann - EPR-4
Physical Scientist - Environment

Date: July 16, 2019