

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Lapine-Fort Rock No. 1 Miles 19-24 Access Road Improvement Project

PP&A No.: 4,040

Project Manager: Donna Martin, TELF-TPP-3

Location: Lake County, OR

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B 1.3 Routine Maintenance

Description of the Proposed Action: The Bonneville Power Administration is planning on improving approximately 4.5 miles of existing access roads along the Lapine-Fort Rock No. 1 115-kv transmission line in Lake County, OR, in the U.S. Forest Service's Deschutes National Forest. Work would take place in line miles 19 through 24 of the transmission line as it trends southeast from Lapine Substation in Deschutes County, OR, to Fort Rock Substation in Lake County, OR. The roads provide access to the transmission easement for transmission line maintenance, inspections, and emergency response, and require periodic work to ensure safe and reliable use. The proposed improvements include minimal regrading and blading followed by resurfacing the road with crushed, compacted rock. The existing road width of approximately 12 ft. would be maintained. No new road construction footprint is proposed, and no in-water work or water crossing features are planned. Construction vehicular traffic would be restricted to existing disturbed areas and road surfaces as much as possible to protect the local native vegetation, and disturbed soils would be stabilized with native grass seed and straw. Construction equipment would likely include a backhoe loader, dump truck, road roller and light duty trucks.

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/ Aaron Siemers
Aaron C. Siemers
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange
Katey Grange
NEPA Compliance Office

Date: March 18, 2020

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: Lapine-Fort Rock No. 1 Miles 19-24 Access Road Improvement Project

Project Site Description

The Lapine-Fort Rock No. 1 Miles 19-24 Access Road Improvement Project is located in the slopes and foothills of the eastern Cascades, in the Pumice Plateau ecoregion of east-central Oregon. The project area is located in Deschutes National Forest (Forest), and managed by the U.S Forest Service (USFS). A network of USFS dirt and gravel access roads are present in the area, and intersect with the BPA access road that runs down the Lapine-Fort Rock No. 1 transmission line right-of-way (ROW). The ROW in the project area is 75 feet wide. Vegetation in the ROW is periodically cut to promote low-growing plant species to maintain electrical clearances. The existing BPA access road, where the proposed work is planned, generally runs straight down the ROW, parallel to the transmission line. The terrain is generally flat, and ranges in elevation from approximately 4650 ft. to 4700 ft. The 115 kV transmission line is supported by monopoles in the project area. Vegetation in the ROW is dominated by sage brush, bitter brush and rabbit brush. Large volcanic rock outcrops are present in some locations. Outside of the cleared ROW, lodgepole pine and ponderosa pine dot the landscape, but canopy cover is patchy and thin in most areas. No waterways are present in the project area.

Hole in the Ground, a nearly mile-wide volcanic explosion crater and lightly trafficked hiking area, is found on the southeast end of the project work area, near BPA transmission structure 24/1.

The project location is detailed below:

Township	Range	Section
24 S	12 E	Sec. 33
24 S	12 E	Sec. 34
25 S	12 E	Sec. 3
25 S	12 E	Sec. 2
25 S	12 E	Sec. 11
25 S	12 E	Sec. 12
25 S	12 E	Sec. 13
25 S	13 E	Sec. 18

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> <p>BPA engaged in consultation with the USFS Deschutes National Forest, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs of Oregon (CTWRO), the Klamath Tribe, the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, and the Burns Paiute Tribes. A field survey by a BPA archaeologist was conducted in September of 2019. On December 12, 2019, BPA issued a determination that the proposed undertaking would result in no historic properties affected. BPA received concurrence from the CTWRO and the Klamath Tribe in December 2019. No other consulted parties responded during the 30-day comment period.</p> <p>BPA and the access road contractor would implement an inadvertent discovery plan in the event historic and cultural resources are discovered during the course of construction activity. If there is an inadvertent discovery of an archaeological site, all work would cease and a Forest Service and BPA archaeologist would be notified immediately to determine how to move forward.</p>		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u></p> <p>The planned road improvements would occur on pre-existing, established road footprint. Staging areas and turn-around zones for construction activity would be established in previously disturbed areas.</p> <p><u>Note:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Any disturbed soils incidental to construction would be stabilized with native seed and weed-free straw or other acceptable erosion and sediment control methods per District or Forest botanist recommendations.		
3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u></p> <p>Light grading of the roads with heavy machinery would potentially disturb some vegetation immediately adjacent to the existing road footprint. These areas would be reseeded with native grasses post-construction.</p> <p>Road work would be completed in areas with abundant native vegetation such as sage brush, bitter brush and rabbit brush.</p> <p>BPA obtained a species list for the project on 02/04/2020. No Endangered Species Act (ESA) – listed plant species are present in the project area. In correspondence with USFS staff regarding the planned project, the USFS did not express concerns regarding the presence of sensitive plant species in the work areas.</p> <p><u>Note:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Construction activity on undisturbed areas vegetated with native plants would be limited as much as possible.To reduce the risk of introducing invasive weeds, all equipment will be cleaned thoroughly, with pressurized water, of dirt and weeds before entering and before departing National Forest System lands.If fill material is needed it will be inspected by the District or Forest weed specialist for invasive plants before use and transport. Only gravel, fill, sand, and rock judged to be weed free by District or Forest weed specialists will be used.		

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



Explanation:

Construction on the project would likely disturb wildlife in the area due to the presence of humans and additional noise. However, disturbance would be temporary, and the Deschutes National Forest provides ample habitat and cover for wildlife outside of the immediate project area.

BPA obtained a species list for the project on 02/04/2020. An effects determination was conducted for fisher. BPA determined that the project would have “no effect” on fisher. In correspondence with USFS staff regarding the planned project, the USFS did not express concerns regarding the presence of sensitive wildlife species in the work areas.

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



Explanation:

The project area is not located in or near a floodplain.

No in-water work, culvert installation, or other water crossing construction is planned. No waterbodies are present in the project area.

Shortnose sucker fish is listed under the Endangered Species Act for the project area. As no work in or near waterbodies is planned, BPA has determined that the project would have “no effect” on shortnose sucker and shortnose sucker critical habitat.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation:

No wetlands are present in or near the project area.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation:

Excavation on the project would only include light grading and not involve depths that would intersect groundwater or aquifers.

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



Explanation:

Land use consists of public lands managed by the USFS for silviculture, recreation, and wildlife habitat. There are no specially designated areas nearby. The project would not impact existing land use.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation:

No large trees would be removed during construction. The road grading and addition of rock would be consistent with existing visual quality.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation:

Some dust may be generated due to construction traffic, transport, and placement of rock, and general construction activities. A fugitive dust plan would be implemented to control dust generation, if needed. With an appropriate dust control mitigation plan, the project would have minor, temporary impacts to air quality.

11. **Noise**



Explanation:

Some temporary noise may be generated due to construction traffic, transport, and placement of rock, and general construction activities. However, the project is in a relatively remote area, away from highly trafficked recreational sites and concentrated human activity.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation:

The project is located in an uninhabited area. The access road contractor would develop a site specific safety plan (SSSP) to protect worker health and 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, if necessary: Not applicable

- 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: Not applicable

- 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: Not applicable

- 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: Not applicable

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: BPA has notified and coordinated planned project activities with the USFS Deschutes National Forest, as well as other stakeholders in the general project area. BPA would continue to coordinate with all stakeholders as necessary during preconstruction planning and the construction phase of the project. During coordination, the Forest expressed concern over heavy equipment potentially impacting existing paved roads.

Note:

- In order to protect Forest road systems, rock would be placed along shoulders and at road junctions where trucks and equipment would be pulling off of paved roads to protect the pavement edge.
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Based on the foregoing, this proposed project does not have the potential to cause significant impacts to any environmentally sensitive resource.

Signed: /s/ Aaron Siemers
Aaron C. Siemers, EPR

Date: March 18, 2020