

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Monroe-Custer No. 2, Structure 60/3, Impairment Removal Project

PP&A No.: 4191

Project Manager: Cynthia Rounds - TEPL-TPP-1

Location: Whatcom County, Washington

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

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to address one surface impairment that was identified on the 500-kilovolt Monroe-Custer No. 2 transmission line between structures 60/3 and 60/4. At this location, the distance from the conductors to the ground surface does not have adequate clearance for operation in certain weather conditions. BPA proposes to re-shape the existing ground surface in this span to achieve adequate clearance. The proposed work would allow BPA's Monroe-Custer No. 2 transmission line to meet current National Electrical Safety Code (NESC) standards for operation in certain weather conditions.

Approximately 1,750 cubic yards of soil would be removed from the ground under the conductor span. The soil would be placed in an adjacent area within the BPA right-of-way, or hauled off-site for disposal. The total area of disturbance is up to approximately 1.4 acres.

Following the excavation and placement of soil, all disturbed areas would be stabilized for erosion and sediment control, and revegetated with a seed mix appropriate for the right-of-way. Equipment that would be likely to be used for this project would include a combination of the following: a dump truck, a bulldozer, a backhoe, an excavator and work trucks. It is estimated that work would take place in late spring/early summer 2021.

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/ Oden W. Jahn

Oden W. Jahn

Natural Resource Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: September 8, 2020

Attachment(s):

Environmental Checklist

BPA Inadvertent Discovery of Cultural Resources Procedure

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

The impairment is located on grass & shrub right-of-way surrounded by privately-owned rural residential and forested properties. There are no waterbodies or wetlands within approximately 300 feet of the project area.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: A BPA Historian and Archaeologist reviewed proposed activities and conducted a cultural survey of the area. BPA's Monroe-Custer No.1 and No.2 transmission lines are located within the APE, however they were energized in 1975 and do not meet the minimum criteria per BPA's Multiple Property Documentation. No cultural resources were identified as a result of the cultural survey. BPA determined that these activities would have no historic properties affected.

On July 22, 2020, the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historical Preservation (DAHP) concurred with the finding. No other comments were received from BPA's consultation efforts.

In the event any archaeological material is encountered during project activities, BPA would follow its Inadvertent Discovery of Cultural Resources Procedure by stopping work in the vicinity and immediately notify the BPA environmental lead, archaeologist, and project manager; interested tribes, DAHP, and the appropriate local, state and Federal agencies. BPA would implement reasonable measures to protect the discovery site, including any appropriate stabilization or covering, and take reasonable steps to ensure the confidentiality of the discovery site, including restricting access.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project would disturb over 1 acre, and require a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) to prevent soil and sediment from leaving the site. After ground disturbing activities are completed, soils would be stabilized using BMP C120 and C121 from the Western Washington Stormwater Manual. The "Meadow Mix" from BMP C120 would be used to reseed the area unless the landowner requests a different seed mix. Additional BMPs would be implemented as necessary to minimize soil erosion. No prime or unique farmlands would be affected.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Federal/state special-status plant species and habitats known to occur in the project area. Therefore, the proposed action would not affect special-status plant species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Federal/state special-status wildlife species and habitats known to occur in the project area; therefore, the proposed action would not affect Federal/state special-status wildlife. Non-sensitive wildlife that may utilize the project area could be affected by construction noise, use of equipment, and human activity; however, these impacts would be temporary, would only occur during daylight hours, and habitat would not be modified in a way that would preclude the future use of the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities are located in upland areas away from waterbodies, floodplains, or listed fish species; therefore, the project would have no impacts to these resources.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is in an upland area and would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities are not expected to impact groundwater or aquifers. Excavation would not occur below approximately 12 feet and is not anticipated to intersect ground water.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is on the BPA ROW surrounded privately-owned rural residential and forested properties. There would be no change to land use at the project location.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not alter visual quality or the overall visual character of the transmission ROW.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Exhaust and dust from utility equipment may temporarily reduce air quality in the immediate project area.

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: No impacts to human health or safety are expected as a result of project activities. The proposed project would correct a potentially unsafe situation on the Monroe-Custer No. 2 transmission line.

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: A notification letter will be sent by the BPA Realty Specialist to the landowner prior to work.

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

Signed: /s/ Oden Jahn - EPI-4, Date: September 8, 2020
Natural Resource Specialist