

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Transmission Line Marker Ball Replacement Phase II Project

PP&A No.: 4444

Project Manager: Dianne Wilson - TEPL-TPP-1

Location: Kittitas, Benton, Grant, Chelan, Douglas, Walla Walla, and Franklin Counties, WA.

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance; B3.2 Aviation activities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to remove and replace marker balls on seven transmission lines, overhead ground wire (OHGW) on one of those lines, and complete access road improvements in multiple counties in Washington State. As part of BPA's wildfire mitigation effort, BPA noted that plastic and fiberglass marker balls can fail at their attachment point on conductor or ground wire, potentially igniting and falling to the ground to start wildfires. BPA crews have identified those marker balls most at risk for failure. BPA plans on completing replacements of the marker balls identified for Phase 2 before the 2021 wildfire season. Phase 2 replacement work is currently planned for July 2021.

BPA proposes to replace marker balls on the Schultz-Wautoma No. 1, Hanford-Wautoma No. 1, Vantage-Hanford No. 1, Chief Joseph-Monroe No. 1, Chief Joseph-Chief Joseph No. 5, Chief Joseph-Chief Joseph No. 6, and Lower Monumental-Ashe No. 1 lines utilizing Human External Cargo (HEC), or a crew suspended from a helicopter. For replacements on these lines, helicopter landing zones would be necessary for helicopters to land and take off, as well as for staging crew and equipment. Access road improvements are expected at Lower Monumental-Ashe No. 1 to access structure 4/2 on mile four. Road improvements would consist of laying down additional rock and would utilize dump trucks, a dozer, grader, and vibratory roller. No further improvements to, grading of, or other ground disturbing work for helicopter landing zones or access roads is anticipated. Large flatbed trucks or similar vehicles would be used to haul materials and equipment but use of loaders, excavators, or other heavy equipment is not anticipated.

Additionally, OHGW replacement is required on the Lower Monumental-Ashe No.1 line, spans 1/3 to 4/2. Replacing the OHGW would be done using a puller and tensioner on either end of the section (structures 1/3 and 4/2), as well as a combination of line trucks, flat beds or trailers, and a front loader or crane.

BPA may utilize either helicopters or drones to examine marker balls prior to replacement and to inspect marker balls following replacement for proper installation.

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/ Treicia Albert

Treicia Albert

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Date: February 23, 2021

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer

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: Transmission Line Marker Ball Replacement Phase II Project

Project Site Description

The project is located throughout southeastern central Washington. The project area traverses mostly scrub and agricultural land and spans several river crossings. Work would occur on privately-owned lands in addition to lands managed by the US Army Corp of Engineers (Corps), US Bureau of Reclamation, US Department of Energy-Richland, Department of Defense Yakima Training Center, Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission, Chelan County Public Utility District, and US Fish and Wildlife Service. See Table 1 below for Township, Range, Section Number, and County information.

Table 1. Township, Range, Section Number, and County Information

Line Corridor	Span(s)	Township, Range, Section	County, State
Schultz-Wautoma No. 1	20/3 – 33/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16N, 21E, Sec. 1, 2, 12 • 16N, 22E, Sec. 7, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 • 16N, 23E, Sec. 19 • 17N, 21E, Sec. 27, 28, 34, 35 	Kittitas, WA
Hanford-Wautoma No. 1	6/4-6/5	13N, 26E, Sec. 20	Benton, WA
Vantage-Hanford No. 1	1/1–1/2	6N, 23E, Sec. 15	Grant, WA
	4/1-4/2	16N, 23E, Sec. 26 16N, 23E, Sec. 35	Grant, WA
	13/4-14/2	15N, 24E, Sec. 26 15N, 24E, Sec. 25	Grant, WA
	24/1-24/2	14N, 26E, Sec. 20	Grant, WA
Chief Joseph-Monroe No. 1	35/1-35/2	26N, 21E, TR52 26N, 21E, Sec. 33	Chelan & Douglas, WA
Chief Joseph-Chief Joseph No. 5	1/1-1/2	29N, 25E, Sec. 24 29N, 25E, Sec. 25 29N, 25E, Sec. 26	Douglas, WA
Chief Joseph-Chief Joseph No. 6	1/1-1/2	29N, 25E, Sec. 24 29N, 25E, Sec. 25 29N, 25E, Sec. 26	Douglas, WA
Lower Monumental-Ashe No. 1	1/4-2/1	12N, 34E, Sec. 3 12N, 34E, Sec. 3	Walla Walla & Franklin, WA
	3/2-3/3	12N, 34E, Sec. 5	Franklin, WA

	28/5-28/6	12N, 30E, Sec. 7	Franklin, WA
	32/1-32/2	12N, 29E, Sec.15	Franklin, WA
	36/4 - 37/2	12N, 28E, Sec. 25 12N, 28E, Sec. 26	Franklin & Benton, WA
	39/2 - 39/4	12N, 28E, Sec, 33	Benton, WA

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Following a review of the potential project impacts to cultural resources, BPA has determined that this undertaking would result in No Historic Properties Affected or No Adverse Effect to Historic Properties.

The BPA Historian review has shown that marker ball replacement is considered normal, in-kind repair work and would not adversely affect the National Register eligibility of any transmission lines.

Initiation letters were sent August 3, 2020 through August 10, 2020 to the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), Chelan County Public Utility District, Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the U.S. Department of Energy Richland Operations Office, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Yakima Training Center, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (Yakama Nation), the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CTCR), the Nez Perce Tribe, and the Hanford Technical Working Group, which includes members from the Yakama Nation, the Nez Perce Tribe, CTUIR, and the Wanapum Band.

Concurrence on the proposed areas of potential effect was received from the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) between August 4, 2020 and August 11, 2020. Concurrence was also received between August 4, 2020 and August 11, 2020 from the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and the Bureau of Reclamation.

The impact of the proposed landing zones, landings, and access roads was assessed through pedestrian survey by BPA archaeologists and BPA contract archaeologists in October and November 2020. BPA sent no historic properties affected or no adverse effect to historic properties determinations between September 2, 2020 and January 8, 2021. DAHP concurred with the determinations of project effect between September 3, 2020 and January 11, 2021. Concurrence also was received from CTCR and USACE between September 2, 2020 and January 9, 2021.

Monitoring or minimization measures are necessary for the implementation of the project as shown below under the Notes section. If any additional work sites (landings, landing zones, access routes, etc.) are necessary for the project, Section 106 consultation and concurrence from the appropriate parties must be obtained prior to use.

Notes:

- **Chief Joseph-Monroe No. 1** - A 30-foot buffer would be flagged around the boundary of site 45DO426 prior to any project related activities.

- **Hanford-Wautoma No. 1** - Members of the Hanford Tribes Working Group would be present during marker ball replacement work to monitor. BPA recommends use of LZs in Township 13 North, Range 26 East, Sections 21 and 22 for the proposed work.
- **Lower Monumental-Ashe No. 1**
 - BPA would prepare a project-specific inadvertent discovery plan prior to marker ball replacement work.
 - BPA would hold a pre-construction briefing with construction personnel prior to marker ball replacement work.
 - The boundary of the grade of the historic alignment of the Snake River Valley Railroad (site 45WW118) would be flagged for avoidance in guard structure location 8 (GS 8). No ground disturbing project related work would take place within the boundaries of this site.
 - A non-ground disturbing guard structure, such as a flower pot or bucket structure, would be used in GS 8 to avoid impacts to site 45WW118 and potential impacts to subsurface cultural deposits associated with site 45WW39.
 - A 30 meter buffer will be flagged for avoidance around site 45WW453. No project related work would take place within this buffered area.
 - OHGW would be aurally suspended in the location of guard structure 9 (GS 9). Use of aerial suspension would avoid the buffered avoidance area for site 45WW453 and ensure work resulted in no impacts to the Union Pacific Hinkle-Spokane Line Wallula-Ayer segment.
 - Project work would be restricted to the paved parking area in landing zone 11 (LZ 11) to avoid impacts to any subsurface cultural deposits associated with site 45WW39 in this area.
- **Schultz-Wautoma No. 1**
 - Landing zones 4, 5, and 6 would not be used, and sites 45KT629, 45KT2746, and 45KT4443 would be avoided by project activities.
 - A 30-meter buffer around isolates 45KT4441 and 45KT4442 would be established and flagged prior to any marker ball replacement work, and both isolates and their surrounding buffer would be avoided by project activities.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Minimal to no ground disturbance is anticipated for majority of the project. Soil disturbance would be limited to access road work in areas that have been covered by gravel already.

Notes: The following minimization measures would be implemented to minimize impacts to geology and

- Erosion control measures and best management practices would be used.
- Drive on existing access roads.
- Reduce work area footprint to the least necessary to safely do the work.
- Crush vegetation in place of remove.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Minimal disturbance to vegetation is anticipated. Vegetation may be crushed in those locations where equipment would be accessing marker balls or where access road improvements would

occur. There would be no effect to ESA-listed plant species. No impacts to state or other sensitive species are anticipated.

Notes: The following minimization measures would be implemented to minimize vegetation impacts.

- Drive on existing access roads.
- Reduce work area footprint to the least necessary to safely do the work.
- Crush vegetation in place of remove.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: In general, the project would have minimal impacts to wildlife and habitat related to temporary disturbance associated with elevated noise and human presence. The project would have no impacts to state-listed and other sensitive species.

The Columbia Basin Pygmy Rabbit is historically known to inhabit areas near some of the project sites; however, the last siting was in 2001 with the nearest siting about 20 miles away. The project would have no effect to ESA-listed species.

Notes: The following minimization measures would be implemented to minimize impacts to wildlife and their habitat.

- Drive on existing access roads.
- Reduce work area footprint to the least necessary to safely do the work.
- Crush vegetation in place of remove.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: There would be no ground disturbing activities in any river, stream, or other waterbody along the project and no riparian vegetation would be impacted. The project would have no effect to ESA-listed fish species.

Notes: The following minimization measures would be implemented to prevent sediment or contaminants from reaching any waterbodies.

- Erosion control measures would be implemented to prevent sedimentation or dust.
- Appropriately stocked spill response kits would be located on vehicles and landing zones used on this project.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: There would be no ground disturbing activities in wetlands along the project.

Notes: The following minimization measures would be implemented to prevent sediment or contaminants from reaching any wetlands.

- Erosion control measures would be implemented to prevent sedimentation or dust.
- Appropriately stocked spill response kits would be located on vehicles and landing zones used on this project.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No impacts to ground water or aquifers are anticipated due to the lack of ground disturbance.

Notes: The following minimization measures would be implemented to minimize groundwater contamination potential.

- Appropriately stocked spill response kits would be located on vehicles, other equipment, fly yards used on this project.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use would occur and project activities would not impact existing land uses, and there would not be any recreational or operational disruptions.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have a minimal impact to visual quality. Replacement marker balls would be similar to the existing marker balls, and consistent with other marker balls along the transmission line.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small amount of vehicular emissions and dust may occur temporarily during construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some temporary construction noise from construction activities and helicopter use would occur during daylight hours. The operational noise of the transmission line would not change.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to human health and safety are anticipated.

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:

BPA realty and environment staff have coordinated the proposed project activities with the US Army Corp of Engineers (Corps), US Bureau of Reclamation, US Department of Energy Richland Operations, the Hanford Technical Working Group, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Wanapum Band, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Nez Perce Tribe, Department of Defense Yakima Training Center, Washington State Parks & Recreation Commission, Chelan County Public Utility District, and US Fish and Wildlife Service, and private landowners.

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

Signed: /s/ Treicia Albert
Treicia Albert - EPR
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: February 23, 2021