

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Shelton – Fairmount No. 2 Line Mile 47 Culvert Replacement & Access Road Improvement Project

PP&A No.: 4,978

Project Manager: Donna Martin, TELF-TPP-3

Location: Jefferson County, Washington

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

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA owns and operates the Shelton-Fairmount No. 2 transmission line, which runs from Shelton Substation in Mason County, WA, north to Fairmount Substation, in Jefferson County, WA, in the Olympic Peninsula. BPA maintains a network of access roads that service the high-voltage transmission corridor. In line mile 47 of the line as it trends north to Fairmount Substation, BPA proposes to replace an undersized 36-foot-long culvert with a larger 72-inch-diameter by 75-foot-long culvert, and install adjacent stabilizing rip rap in an unnamed tributary to Quilcene Bay. Road improvements, including light blading, placement of rock, and compaction, would also be required to allow for equipment to be able to access the work area.

This project would use equipment including dump trucks, an excavator, mini excavator (to place streambed material), bulldozer, and a roller. BPA would isolate the in-water work area, excavate the site, remove the old culvert, install the new culvert, and backfill. To isolate the work area, coffer dams would be installed in the stream channel, and a water diversion system would be used including a pump and a pipe for bypass to maintain downstream flows. Once the culvert is in place and the grade is restored, a mini excavator would place the streambed material. The dump truck, bulldozer and roller would grade the surface rock on top of the culvert. Erosion control devices (i.e. straw wattles, silt fencing, straw bales, etc.) would be utilized to minimize sedimentation into the unnamed tributary during project activities. Disturbed areas would be reseeded with a climate appropriate seed mix and mulched with weed free straw to minimize erosion and sedimentation. The work would be completed during late summer 2022, during the established in-water work window for the waterway.

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 Siemers

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange Date: March 30, 2022

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.

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Project Site Description

The project is located in the Marine West Coast Forest ecoregion of the Coast Range in northwestern Washington, in the Olympic Peninsula. The ecoregion has high amounts of precipitation and relatively moderate temperatures. Vegetation is dominated by coniferous forests of fir, spruce, hemlock and cedar, which, when left intact, grow to large heights and advanced age.

The project area is fairly rural, less than three miles from the town of Quilcene, WA, in lands managed by the state of Washington, and bordering the U.S. Forest Service's Olympic National Forest. Terrain is rolling hills and mountainous. Some of the adjacent tracts show relatively recent indications of timber harvest. Quilcene Bay is located less than a mile to the east. The transmission corridor is approximately 275 feet in width, and includes three additional high voltage transmission lines. Vegetation in the corridor is managed to promote low-growing species that won't encroach on electrical safety and reliability clearances. Vegetation in the corridor includes bracken fern, foxglove, Scotch broom, blackberry, vine maple, and various grass species.

An unnamed tributary to Quilcene Bay runs through the project area. An undersized, perched culvert is present. According to state databases, the waterway is not fish-bearing. Marbled murrelet and northern spotted owl designated critical habitat is present less than a half mile to the west.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, BPA identified an area of potential effect (APE) for the project, and initiated consultation on February 28, 2020. Consulting parties included the WA Dept. of Natural Resources, the Suquamish Tribe, the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, and the WA Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation (DAHP). A BPA archaeologist performed a ground survey of the area. No historic properties were located within the APE. On November 5, 2020, BPA made a determination that the proposed undertaking would result in no historic properties affected, and received concurrence from DAHP on the same day. No responses from the other consulting parties was received.

Notes:

- BPA would implement an inadvertent discovery plan in the event that, during construction activities, historic and cultural resources are discovered.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project would include blading and excavation of existing access road infrastructure. Except for the increased excavation footprint of the new, larger culvert, disturbance outside of the existing road prism would be minimal. All excavation and fill at the project site would be returned to grade that blends with existing contours, compacted, and stabilized.

Notes:

- During construction, BPA would implement sediment and erosion control best management practices on all disturbed soils. Disturbed, exposed soils would be stabilized with weed free straw and/or erosion control blankets, and seeded with a native, climate appropriate seed mix.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project would disturb plants in the immediate work area, adjacent to the culvert replacement site; the disturbance would be isolated to work areas. There are no special status plants that would potentially be impacted. Disturbed soils, not stabilized with rock, would be seeded and stabilized with weed free straw and/or erosion control blankets upon project completion.

No Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed or special-status plants are present in the work area.

Notes:

- Construction crews would be required to minimize work areas and ground disturbance as much as possible.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project would potentially impact wildlife, such as mammals and birds due to increased noise and human activity associated with construction. However, disturbance would be temporary. Project activities would likely take approximately 2 to 3 weeks, and the surrounding forest provides ample habitat for wildlife to find cover.

Due to the potential presence of ESA-listed marbled murrelet in the project area, which could be disturbed during construction, BPA reached out to the WA office of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) to discuss ESA compliance. At the recommendation of USFWS, BPA conducted a marbled murrelet habitat and nesting tree survey within 100 meters of the project area. During the field survey, no suitable marbled murrelet nesting trees were identified. BPA entered into informal consultation and made a determination of "may effect, not likely to adversely affect" for the project's impacts to marbled murrelet. BPA received a letter of concurrence from USFWS on February 17, 2022 (consultation code 2022-0005648).

BPA made a determination of "No Effect" for other ESA-listed species in the project area. No special status state species would be significantly impacted by the project's activities.

Notes:

- During marbled murrelet nesting season (April 1st – Sept. 23rd) daily timing restrictions would be implemented to reduce potential disturbance to nesting marbled murrelet during chick feedings. Construction activities would be restricted to the period two hours after official sunrise and ending two hours prior to official sunset.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA proposes to replace an existing culvert in an unnamed tributary to Quilcene Bay. The stream is incised near the crossing. The ordinary high water mark near the culvert crossing is approximately 2 to 4 feet. According to state databases, and confirmed with WA Dept. of Natural Resources, the stream is not fish-bearing at the location of the crossing. The current culvert is undersized and perched. The new culvert will improve hydrologic connectivity in the watershed, and reduce the risk of scour and blow out of the culvert. BPA would submit a Section 404 Clean Water Act permit application to U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to permit the work in the waterway under Nationwide Permit 57 (Electric Utility Line and Telecommunications Activities), and would submit an application to WA Dept. of Ecology for Section 401 Water Quality Certification (in the event a separate certification is required). BPA has obtained a Hydraulic Project Approval consistency review from the WA Dept. of Fish & Wildlife.

Notes:

- In water work would not proceed until all applicable permits have been obtained
- In water work would occur during the established in-water work window for unlisted streams in Jefferson County, WA (July 16th – October 31st)
- In order to protect water quality, the work area would be isolated prior to ground disturbance, and downstream flows would be maintained at all time through the use of a pump and diversion pipe.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present in the project area that would be impacted by project activities.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No project activities would occur at subsurface depths that would intercept or impact groundwater and aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Existing land use, which includes high voltage transmission corridor, and lands managed by the State of Washington, would not be impacted by the project activities.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not significantly alter the existing visual profile of the area. Culvert replacement and access road improvements would blend in with the current visual profile.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction would have temporary, limited impacts to air quality associated with vehicle use and dust generation.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction would have temporary, limited impacts to noise due to construction activity. The work area is remote, with few to no human receptors.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA's access road contractor would submit a Safety Plan for review and approve prior to ground disturbance.

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 has discussed the project with WA Dept. of Natural Resources who manages the land, and would continue to coordinate activities until construction completion.

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 Siemers, EPR-4
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: March 30, 2022