

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Grandview-Red Mountain No. 1 Impairment Corrections

Project No.: P04287

Project Manager: Dianne L. Bonner, TEPL-TPP-1

Location: Benton County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.6 Additions and Modifications to Transmission Facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to correct 31 impairments along approximately 22 miles of the 115-kilovolt (kV) Grandview-Red Mountain No. 1 transmission line in Benton County, Washington. All work would occur within BPA's existing transmission line right-of-way on private land and land owned by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). The project is required to bring the transmission line into compliance with the National Electrical Safety Code (NESC), thereby ensuring system safety and reliability and preventing wildfires and potential damage to the lines and equipment.

BPA would correct 29 impairments by replacing existing wooden H-frame transmission structures. The new structures would be approximately 5 to 20 feet taller than the existing structures and would be replaced in approximately the same locations, with one exception (structure 9/4) that would be relocated approximately 30 feet back-on-line (BOL). The remaining two impairments would be corrected by installing new 6-foot standoff insulators (structure 1/11) and by raising the cross arms approximately 6 feet (structure 20/3). The transmission structures and the proposed corrective actions are summarized in the table below:

Grandview-Red Mountain No 1 (Transmission Structure)	Proposed Corrective Action	Landowner
Structure 1/11	Add 6-foot standoff insulator	Private
Structure 2/1	Raise structure by 15 feet	Private
Structure 2/2	Raise structure by 15 feet	Private
Structure 2/4	Raise structure by 15 feet	Private
Structure 2/5	Raise structure by 10 feet	Private
Structure 3/5	Raise structure by 15 feet	Private
Structure 5/6	Raise structure by 15 feet	Private
Structure 8/4	Replace structure in-kind	Private

Structure 9/3	Raise structure by 20 feet	Private
Structure 9/4	Raise structure by 20 feet; move BOL 30 feet	Private
Structure 10/2	Raise structure by 15 feet	Private
Structure 11/9	Raise structure by 15 feet	Private
Structure 12/3	Raise structure by 5 feet	Private
Structure 12/4	Raise structure by 10 feet	WDNR
Structure 14/1	Raise structure by 15 feet	Private
Structure 14/3	Raise structure by 10 feet	Private
Structure 14/9	Raise structure by 5 feet	Private
Structure 14/10	Raise structure by 10 feet	Private
Structure 14/11	Raise structure by 15 feet	Private
Structure 14/12	Raise structure by 10 feet	Private
Structure 15/11	Raise structure by 10 feet	Private
Structure 16/10	Raise structure by 10 feet	Private
Structure 16/11	Raise structure by 15 feet	Private
Structure 20/2	Raise structure by 15 feet	Private
Structure 20/3	Raise structure cross arms by 6 feet	Private
Structure 21/10	Raise structure by 10 feet	WDNR
Structure 21/11	Raise structure by 15 feet	Private
Structure 22/1	Raise structure by 15 feet	Private
Structure 22/13	Raise structure by 10 feet	WDNR
Structure 23/3	Raise structure by 10 feet	WDNR
Structure 23/4	Raise structure by 5 feet	WDNR

Replacing the structures would require excavating around the bases of the existing structures, removing the existing structures, and then positioning the new structures in the existing holes. BPA could also replace buried counterpoise, as necessary if it is damaged during the structure replacements. New hardware would be installed on the structures, and the existing conductor would be reattached. Excavated soil would be used for backfill or spread evenly around the bases of the structures. Work areas would extend up to approximately 1,000 square feet centered on each structure. In total, up to approximately 31,000 square feet (0.71 acres) could be temporarily disturbed. Work at each structure would likely be completed within a single day.

To complete the project, BPA would use heavy equipment, including excavators, boom trucks, and bucket trucks, as well as light-duty pickup trucks and power tools. In some instances, vehicles and equipment would be required to travel off-road for short distances (i.e., no more than approximately 1,000 feet) to access structures within cattle pastures. BPA would use a boat or a

helicopter to access structure 20/3, which is located on an island within the Yakima River. No access road work or landing pad construction would be required.

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/ W. Walker Stinnette

W. Walker Stinnette

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel March 7, 2023

Sarah T. Biegel Date

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: Grandview-Red Mountain No. 1 Impairment Corrections

Project Site Description

The project site includes 31 transmission structures along approximately 22 miles of the Grandview-Red Mountain No. 1 transmission line from structure 1/11 to structure 23/4 in Benton County, Washington. All work would occur within BPA's existing transmission line right-of-way easement, which is located on private land and on land managed by the Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). The entirety of the project site consists of irrigated agricultural lands, pasturelands, and heavily disturbed lands at the margins of paved and unpaved roads. These areas contain limited native vegetation (e.g., common grasses, forbs, and sagebrush), and are mostly dominated by row crops or non-native, weedy species. Outside of the project site, the surrounding area has similar land uses along with some rural residential properties. No wetlands are present within the project site. Three structures are located near bodies of water: structure 14/11 adjacent to Roza Canal and structures 20/2 and 20/3 in the floodplain of the Yakima River.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On October 21, 2022, BPA initiated National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 consultation with the following parties:

- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP)
- WDNR

BPA conducted background research and an intensive field survey of the Area of Potential Effects (APE). No previously recorded archaeological resources were identified within the APE, and no new archaeological resources were identified during the field survey. The Grandview-Red Mountain No. 1 transmission line and the Roza Canal are located within the APE and are considered eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). However, the proposed undertaking would not alter the integrity or eligibility of these historic resources. Therefore, BPA determined on January 7, 2023, that the proposed undertaking would result in no adverse effect to historic properties (BPA CR Project No.: WA 2021 234; DAHP Log No.: 2022-10-07000-BPA). Concurrence with BPA's determination was received from DAHP on January 9, 2023, and from WDNR on January 11, 2023. No other comments were received.

Notes:

- Implement inadvertent discovery protocols in the unlikely event that cultural material is encountered during the implementation of this project. BPA would require that work be

halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA and in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Up to approximately 31,000 square feet (0.71 acres) of temporary soil disturbance would occur from excavation to remove and install transmission structures and from soil compaction and rutting due to vehicle and equipment use. Excavated soils would be temporarily stored onsite, and then backfilled and returned to original contours. Temporarily disturbed soils would stabilize as vegetation is reestablished and would eventually return to pre-existing conditions following completion of the proposed action. The proposed action would not impact geology.

Notes:

- Implement standard construction best management practices to minimize erosion and sedimentation.
- Restrict off-road vehicle use and construction activities to the minimum area necessary given safety and construction requirements.
- Reseed disturbed areas during the appropriate time period for germination with a native, regionally-appropriate seed mix, or as agreed upon with the underlying landowners.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The proposed action would crush, strip, or bury up to approximately 31,000 square feet (0.71 acres) of common low-growing grasses, weeds, and sagebrush. Disturbed areas would be reseeded and would eventually return to pre-existing conditions following completion of the proposed action. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status plant species near the project site, and no suitable special-status species habitat is present.

Notes:

- Implement standard construction best management practices to minimize erosion and sedimentation.
- Restrict off-road vehicle use and construction activities to the minimum area necessary given safety and construction requirements.
- Reseed disturbed areas during the appropriate time period for germination with a native, regionally-appropriate seed mix, or as agreed upon with the underlying landowners.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary disruption of normal wildlife behavior and wildlife displacement could occur from elevated noise and human presence during construction. However, there would be no permanent impacts to wildlife habitat, and temporarily disturbed or displaced wildlife would likely reoccupy the site following completion of the proposed action. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status wildlife species near the project site, and no suitable special-status species habitat is present.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The proposed action includes replacement of structure 14/11, which is located approximately 30 feet from Roza Canal, and structure 20/2, which is located within the Yakima River floodplain. Work would also occur at structure 20/3, which is located on an island in the Yakima River; however, no ground disturbance would occur at this location. Mid-Columbia steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), which is protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), is present in this stretch of the Yakima River. The river has also been designated critical habitat for steelhead trout and bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*). Standard construction best management practices would prevent indirect impacts to water bodies and special-status fish and would minimize ground disturbance within the Yakima River floodplain.

Notes:

- Install transmission structures 14/11 and 20/2 with pole wraps and culvert footings to prevent leachate from entering nearby water bodies.
- Deploy temporary matting around structure 20/2 to minimize ground disturbance within Yakima River floodplain, if required depending on recent precipitation and ground saturation.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present within the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground disturbance is unlikely to reach depths to groundwater and no new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers are proposed. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action could temporarily impact agricultural and residential land uses due to construction noise, safety-related access restrictions, and ground disturbance. Work at each structure would likely be completed within a single day. There would be no long-term change in land use following completion of the proposed action. The project site is not located in a specially-designated area.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would cause a perceptible change in the appearance of the project site. During construction, the presence of construction equipment and general construction activities, including vegetation disturbance, would cause temporary visual impacts. Although existing transmission structures would be replaced with similar structures in approximately the same locations, new transmission structures would be 5 to 20 feet taller than the existing structures and would be relocated in one case (structure 9/4). These permanent changes would be minor relative to the scale of the existing structures and equipment and would be consistent with the existing visual quality of the area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would produce minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions in the local area. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the proposed action.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would result in minor and temporary noise from the use of vehicles, heavy equipment, and power tools during construction, which could be audible from nearby residential properties. Noise impacts would be temporary (approximately one day at each structure) and would only occur during daylight hours (approximately 7 AM to 5 PM). There would be no permanent change in ambient noise following completion of the proposed action.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would be completed by transmission line maintenance professionals trained in proper techniques and equipment use. The project would not generate or use hazardous materials and would not create conditions that would increase risk to human health and safety. Completion of the project would bring the transmission line into compliance with safety standards; thereby ensuring system safety and reliability and preventing wildfires and potential damage to the lines and equipment. Therefore, no impacts to human health and safety are expected as a result of the proposed action.

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: The proposed action would occur entirely within BPA's existing transmission line right-of-way easement, and BPA notified underlying landowners on November 2 and 3, 2022. No other landowner notification, involvement, or coordination would be required.

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

Signed: /s/ W. Walker Stinnette March 7, 2023
W. Walker Stinnette Date
Environmental Protection Specialist