

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Bell TLM District FY 21 Wood Pole Replacements

Project No.: 4964

Project Manager: Alla Kirsanova – TEPL-TPP-1

Location: Pend Oreille, Washington and Bonner, Idaho

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 perform in-kind replacement of six wood pole structures and associated structural/electrical components (e.g., cross arms, insulators, guy anchors, etc.) along several transmission lines and routine maintenance on the Boundary-Nelway and Boundary-Waneta access roads.

Replacement poles would be placed in or adjacent to existing holes following removal of current pole structures and may be re-augured to assure proper depth placement. Minor maintenance at landings is scheduled to be performed where necessary to facilitate safe access. Temporary cribbing may be utilized to level and stabilize line truck out-riggers.

Routine maintenance is proposed on approximately 4,800 feet (ft) of established access road along the Boundary-Nelway and Boundary-Waneta transmission lines. Proposed work would occur on Forest Service Road 1-002-02-2 (1048 ft) to improve access to Boundary-Nelway No. 1 structure 2/2 and Forest Service Road 1-002-02-3 (3777 ft) to improve access to Boundary-Waneta No. 1 structure 2/2. Specifically, BPA proposes to conduct the following activities to maintain road surface integrity:

Access Road Surface Maintenance: Light road grading, to include smoothing, reshaping, and filling irregularities, not to impact any native soil beneath imported fill. Rock would be added to existing road surfaces, approaches, and landings.

Drainage Feature Maintenance: Clearing vegetation and debris through a combination of hand and mechanical methods from ditches, cross-drain culvers, and other drainage features. Repair of existing fords, drain dips, and water bars. Ditch maintenance immediately adjacent to access roads that maintains the existing width to depth ratio. All preventative maintenance would be completed in a manner that minimizes disturbance, but restores engineered drainage features to their original capability, thus preventing larger scale washouts, landslides, and sedimentation into waterbodies.

The proposed maintenance activities would not require or include the construction of new access roads, drainage features, or other new ground-disturbing activities beyond those areas previously disturbed.

Wood pole replacement locations are listed below:

Transmission Line	Structure	TRS	County, State
Albeni Falls – Sand Creek No. 1	29/3	T57N R2W SEC3	Bonner, ID
Bell – Usk No. 1	48/6	T32N R44E SEC6	Pend Oreille, WA
Boundary – Nelway No. 1	2/3, 2/4	T40N R43E SEC2	Pend Oreille, WA
Bronx – Sand Creek No. 1	10/3	T57N R2W SEC3	Bonner, ID
Sacheen – Albeni Falls No. 1	10/3	T31N R45E SEC23	Pend Oreille, WA
Boundary – Nelway No. 1 Access Road	FS 1-002-02-2	T40N R43E SEC2	Pend Oreille, WA
Boundary – Waneta No. 1 Access Road	FS 1-002-02-3	T40N R43E SEC3	Pend Oreille, WA

The proposed action would maintain reliable power in the region. All work would be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA standards.

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/ Adrienne Wojtasz

Adrienne Wojtasz
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer Date: October 19, 2023

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: Bell TLM District FY 21 Wood Pole Replacements

Project Site Description

Proposed routine maintenance activities would be conducted along the transmission lines in Pend Oreille County, Washington and Bonner County, Idaho. Proposed maintenance activities would be performed in the existing transmission line right-of-ways and access road easements which are located in the forested, rural, and undeveloped areas. Land in the project area is Colville National Forest, county, and privately owned.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, the Kalispel Tribe of Indians, the Kootenai Tribe, the United States Forest Service – Colville National Forest, the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, and the Washington DAHP on January 4, 2021. On January 5, 2021, DAHP concurred with the project APE and assigned the project DAHP Log No. 2021-01-00015-BPA. BPA did not receive any other responses. BPA sent a no adverse effect to historic properties determination on August 29, 2023. DAHP concurred on September 1, 2023, Idaho SHPO concurred on September 15, 2023, and the USFS concurred on September 7, 2023. No additional response was received within 30 days.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Localized soil disturbance would occur during wood pole replacements, landing, and access road improvements. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized as necessary.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minimal disturbance to vegetation is anticipated. There would be no effect to ESA-listed plant species. No impacts to state or federally sensitive species are anticipated. Project activities would be limited to the already impacted right-of-way and would not substantially alter existing plant communities.

In addition, on National Forest System lands managed by the Colville National Forest, BPA would comply with the *Standard Operating Procedures for limiting the spread of invasive species and fire prevention as directed in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA)*.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area does not include habitat for any Federal or State special-status species. There would be no effect to ESA-listed species in the area. Project activities would be limited to the already impacted right-of-ways and would not substantially alter the footprint or operational noise of the line; therefore, wildlife and associated habitat would not be permanently affected. Minor elevated noise and human presence may occur during the work period to cause a temporary disruption to area wildlife.

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 removal.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are two ephemeral drainages in the project area with existing ford crossings present. State databases indicate that these waterways are not fish bearing. BPA proposes maintenance activities at these ford crossing locations. No in water work is proposed and work would be performed during the summer period when the channel is dry. As ephemeral drainages and maintenance activities, these waterways are not regulated by the Clean Water Act; therefore, no Section 404 permitting would be required. Erosion control best management practices would be used to ensure sedimentation into any water body would not occur.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present in the vicinity of the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No use of groundwater proposed and excavation would not extend to a depth that would intersect groundwater.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No specially-designated areas were identified within the project area. No change in land use would occur and project activities would not impact existing land uses.

For the project in the Colville National Forest, the Memorandum of Understanding between the Bonneville Power Administration United States Department of Energy and the United States Forest Service United States Department of Agriculture Regarding Transmission Facilities and Access to Those Facilities on National Forest System Lands Standard Operation Procedures listed below would be implemented:

- **Section V** Transmission Facilities
- **Section X** Fire Control Communication and Coordination
- **Appendix E** Fire Prevention and Suppression

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be performed within existing transmission line right-of-ways. Access road, replacement of wood poles, and associated components would be in-kind and replaced in the same location.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have a small, temporary impact on air quality from vehicle emissions and dust generated during construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours. The operation noise of the transmission line would not change.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would allow safe and timely access to the transmission line, which would help reduce outage times and maintain reliable power to the region.

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 personnel and the environmental specialist would coordinate the proposed project activities with the Colville National Forest, Bonner County, and private landowners prior to the project initiation and any concerns regarding proposed transmission line maintenance activities would be addressed.

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

Signed: /s/ Adrienne Wojtasz

Adrienne Wojtasz – EPR-Bell-1,
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: October 19, 2023