

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: P03957 - FY20 Northern California Redmond District Priority Poles

PP&A No.: 4982

Project Manager: Meadow Nelson – TELP-TPP-1

Location: Modoc County, California

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 in-kind replacement of four wood pole structures and associated structural/electrical components (e.g. cross arms, insulators, guy anchors, etc.) along selected BPA transmission lines in the Redmond TLM District. The proposed project would allow safe and timely access to the transmission lines which would reduce outage times and maintain reliable power in the region.

The following structures would be replaced: structure 1/13 on the Canby Tap to Malin-Hilltop No 1 transmission line; structure 3/2 and 9/8 on the Hilltop-Warner No 1 transmission line; and structure 49/3 on the Malin-Hilltop No 1 transmission line. Access road work would also occur. .

Replacement poles would be placed approximately 5 feet ahead or back on line from the existing structure, following removal of current pole structures. Maintenance along existing access road prisms and landings would be performed where necessary to facilitate safe access. Access road maintenance includes blading, shaping, rocking, and construction of water bars and drain dips. Approximately 12 waterbars would be repaired and 11 new waterbars would be installed. Further, 3 new drain dips and 2 new gates would be installed. Around 26,500 linear feet (about 5 miles) of access road maintenance would occur and around 9 new landings about 50 feet by 50x feet in size would be constructed. An 11.8 acre material yard located in Deschutes County would be used to stage materials and will require grading, rocking and fencing. These lines include: Canby Tap to Malin-Hilltop No 1, Hilltop-Warner No 1, and the Malin-Hilltop No 1 transmission line.

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/ Zoe Wellschlager

Zoe Wellschlager

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer Date: March 20, 2024

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: P03957 - FY20 California Redmond District Priority Poles

Project Site Description

The project is located in Northern California. The area is characterized by grasslands, sagebrush, and ponderosa pine dominated forests. The majority of the project area is located within the Modoc National Forest, managed by the US Forest Service (USFS), while a small section of line lies within the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed lands. Land use surrounding the right-of-way (ROW) corridor in the proposed project area is recreational, timber harvest and rangeland. The corridor ranges from 80 ft. to 160 ft. wide in the project area. Soils are generally silty, sandy and rocky, with patchy vegetation cover. Vegetation within the ROW is periodically managed to remove tall growing vegetation and promote low-growing species. Adjacent to the ROW are pines, juniper and other tree species within forested sections of the project area. Native shrubs such as sagebrush, rabbitbrush and various grasses dominate the dryer sections of the project area. Several intermittent waterways and small wetlands are present near or in the project area.

Transmission Line/ROW	Structure/Roadwork	Township	Range	Section	Land Manager
Canby Tap to Malin-Hilltop No 1	1/13	CAT43N	R9E	SEC33	USFS
	Access road work included to reach structure.				USFS
Hilltop-Warner No 1	3/2	CAT43N	R12E	SEC30	USFS
	9/8	CAT42N	R12E	SEC12	USFS
	Access road work included to reach structures.				USFS and BLM
Malin-Hilltop No 1	49/3	CAT43N	R10E	SEC30	USFS
	Access road work included to reach structure.				USFS and BLM

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with the California State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Cedarville Rancheria Northern Paiute Tribes, the Fort Bidwell Indian Community of the Fort Bidwell Reservation of California, the Pit River Tribe, and the United States Forest Service – Devils Garden Ranger District on October 28, 2022. California SHPO provided concurrence with the Area of Potential Effect (APE) via a letter dated November 16, 2022. BPA sent a no adverse effect to historic resources determination on December 21, 2023, and California SHPO responded with a request for more information on January 17, 2024, which BPA sent on February 27, 2024.

On March 4, 2024, California SHPO concurred with BPA's determination of effect. No additional response was received within 30 days.

In the event any archaeological material is encountered during project activities, work would be stopped and the BPA environmental lead, archaeologist, and project manager would be immediately notified. Reasonable measures would be taken to protect the discovery site, including any appropriate stabilization or covering.

Notes:

- A cultural resources monitor would be present during all construction activities near sites P-25-001733, P-25-001734, P-25-003144, and P-25-007207 on Malin-Hilltop No1 from 46/2 to 46/6 and along related access roads. All construction activities would be restricted to the existing road prism and landings. The access roads through these sites would be flagged off to prevent off-road driving.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All wood pole replacements would be in-kind and be placed near the same location as the existing poles. Localized soil disturbance would occur during wood pole replacements, landing improvements, and access road maintenance activities. 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: Project activities would be limited to the already impacted right-of-way and would not substantially alter existing plant communities. No Federal special status or state listed plants are present. No concerns about sensitive plant species were expressed by public land managers.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction on the project would likely disturb wildlife in the area due to the presence of humans and additional noise. However, disturbance would be temporary and limited to the already impacted ROW and would not substantially alter the long-term footprint or operational noise of the line; therefore, wildlife and associated habitat would not be affected. No concerns about sensitive wildlife species were expressed by public land managers.

Notes:

- Should any proposed or listed endangered, threatened, or sensitive species be found during project activities within, adjacent, or near enough that activities could be a disturbance, USFWS and USFS Wildlife Biologist will be notified immediately, and activities would be halted until their effects can be determined and their significance assessed.
- If an active raptor nest is discovered during implementation, a USFS wildlife biologist will be consulted to determine necessary protection measures and a Land Resource Monitoring Plan with timing restrictions would be followed.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No in-water work is planned in or near ESA-listed fish streams. All stormwater would be infiltrated on-site and work would take place during the dry season. The work location is in

arid Northeastern California. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized to ensure sediment and other contaminants do not enter bodies of water; therefore, water bodies, floodplains, and fish would not be affected by the proposed project activities.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No in-water work is planned in or near wetlands. Several different types of wetlands exist in the project area where roadwork improvement would occur; however, the work planned would be on existing roadways and should not create an additional impact to the wetlands present. Furthermore, work is planned for summer when water table levels would be lower and there is less risk of disturbing wetlands. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized to ensure sediment and other contaminants do not enter bodies of water; therefore, water bodies, floodplains, and fish would not be affected by the proposed project activities.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities are not expected to impact groundwater or aquifers. The maximum depth of disturbance would be about 12 feet below ground surface, making it unlikely that ground water would be encountered as ground water measurements from the United States Geological Survey indicate that ground water near the project area is regularly over a hundred feet below ground level. Spill prevention measures would be utilized during construction activities to avoid creating a pathway for groundwater contamination.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Though the land uses in the project area may be temporarily impacted from September 23rd, 2024, through November 6th, 2024, the proposed action would not alter existing land use, and is not located in a specially-designated area. Furthermore, roads near the project area could still be utilized by recreationists and there are many alternative recreational areas nearby for the public to utilize during the project performance period. The project would not result in permanent changes or impacts to land use. The material yard for pole storage would be developed to manage treated wood poles. Appropriate BMPs will be utilized to contain the treated wood poles.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be performed within existing transmission line ROW. Replacement of wood poles and associated components would be in-kind and in the same location. Access road work would occur at established roads. The project would be consistent with the existing visual quality of the area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Exhaust and dust from utility and construction equipment may temporarily reduce air quality in the immediate project area. A fugitive dust plan would be implemented to control dust generation, if needed. With an appropriate dust control mitigation plan, the project would have minor, temporary impacts to air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise of the transmission line would not change. The project area is also relatively remote and located away from recreational sites and concentrated human activity.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA personnel would develop a site-specific health and safety plan to address any hazards during the proposed work. The proposed work is necessary to ensure ongoing safe and reliable operation of the transmission line and to maintain power delivery in 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 would notify and coordinate with the landowners/managers in advance of the construction of the proposed project. The BPA realty specialist has been in contact with multiple BLM offices and the USFS was

given advance notice of the project.

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

Signed: /s/ Zoe Wellsluger
Zoe Wellsluger
Scientist (Environmental)

Date: March 20, 2024