

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Sammamish-Maple Valley Roads and Impairments

PP&A No.: 5110

Project Manager: Jodie Anderson, TEPL-TPP-1

Location: King, WA

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) is proposing to conduct road work on approximately 15 miles of access roads along the Sammamish-Maple Valley transmission line corridor. The proposed road work would include improvement, reconstruction, and new construction. Road improvement and reconstruction would require the application of various sizes of aggregate, blading, and compaction. About 2 miles of new road construction would also require brushing and additional blading prior to the application of aggregate. BPA would also construct approximately 5 acres of landings adjacent to structures to provide access to the towers. Landing construction would include the removal of brush, blading, grading, and the application and compaction of aggregate. In addition to the road work, BPA would clean or construct 10 miles of ditch, one stream culvert, and several cross drain culverts. BPA would use approximately 10 miles of existing road to access the construction areas, noted as "Direction of Travel" in the work summary. No work would be completed on any roads labeled as "Direction of Travel". BPA would also correct two impairments, which is where the ground to conductor distance is not great enough to meet requirements. To correct this, approximately 500 cubic yards of material would be excavated from below the transmission line and spread nearby. To accomplish all of the work listed above, light-duty trucks, bulldozers, dump trucks, excavators, graders, cranes, and other equipment may be used.

The Federal Columbia River Transmission System Act directs BPA to construct, acquire, operate, maintain, repair, relocate, and replace the transmission system, including facilities and structures appurtenant thereto (16 United States Code [U.S.C] § 838i(b)). The Administrator is further charged with maintaining electrical stability and reliability, selling transmission and interconnection services, and providing service to BPA's customers. (16 U.S.C § 838b(b-d)). The Administrator is also authorized to conduct electrical research, development, experimentation, tests, and investigation related to construction, operation, and maintenance of transmission systems and facilities. (16 U.S.C § 838i(b)(3)).

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.¹

/s/ Jonnel Deacon

Jonnel Deacon
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer Date: March 3, 2025

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

¹ BPA is aware of the November 12, 2024, decision in *Marin Audubon Society v. Federal Aviation Administration*, No. 23-1067 (D.C. Cir. Nov. 12, 2024). To the extent that a court may conclude that the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA are not judicially enforceable or binding on this agency action, BPA has nonetheless elected to follow those regulations at 40 Code Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) §§ 1500– 1508, in addition to the US Department of Energy’s NEPA implementing procedures at 10 C.F.R. Part § 1021, to meet the agency’s obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 *et seq.*

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: Sammamish-Maple Valley Roads and Impairments

Project Site Description

Work would occur in and adjacent to the BPA right of way (ROW) in western Washington. The project area and surroundings are primarily forested while in the Cascade foothills. Small portions of the line pass through rural and suburban communities. The stream where the culvert would be installed is considered an intermittent, non-fish bearing stream.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Pursuant to its responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR 800, BPA initiated consultation with the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe, the City of Issaquah, the City of Sammamish, King County Historic Preservation Program, the Washington Department of Natural Resources, and Washington State Parks and Recreation on March 23, 2022. DAHP concurred with the APE and the determination of no adverse effect on March 23, 2022, the Snoqualmie Tribe responded on March 24, 2022, and requested that an archaeological survey be conducted, and the City of Issaquah responded on April 26, 2022, and noted that they had no record of cultural resources within the APE on their lands. No other responses were received within 30 days.

In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA will 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

Explanation: Stormwater best management practices (BMPs) would be used as needed during the project to protect the surrounding area from runoff and erosion. Disturbed sites would be stabilized upon completion of project activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Vegetation would be permanently removed in new landings and access roads and vegetation would be temporarily removed in the impairment soil removal areas. Work would occur in areas maintained as an open transmission line corridor and temporary disturbance areas would be revegetated. No special status species are known to exist in this location.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Wildlife would be temporarily disturbed by construction work while conducting access road work, building landings, and removing impairments. Wildlife would be expected to relocate to adjacent habitat and return upon completion of construction activities. Work would occur in areas maintained as an open transmission line corridor. No special status species are known to exist in this location.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: One stream culvert would be included in the design and would be permitted appropriately. While likely dry during the summer in water work window, dewatering procedures would be used in accordance with federal regulations. Appropriate stormwater BMPs would be used during the project as needed to control runoff or erosion. Work areas would be stabilized upon completion of project activities.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: A wetland delineation was completed in 2023 for the project area. Approximately 320 square feet of wetlands would be permanently impacted by the project due to necessary armoring of culverts inlets and outlets. A similar size area would be temporarily impacted in order to access the culvert replacement locations. BPA would purchase wetland mitigation credits to offset the permanent impacts to wetlands in accordance with the Clean Water Act.

Notes: Obtain appropriate Clean Water Act Section 404 and Section 401 Certificate for project-related fill of wetlands and waterbodies.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities are unlikely to impact groundwater or aquifers, including public and private wells or springs. Any spills would be addressed immediately and follow BPA protocol for cleanup and regulatory notification.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No specially-designated areas are present. Project locations are within existing transmission line corridors and would not change existing land uses.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed improvements are consistent with the surroundings and would not significantly change the existing visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project has a short duration and involves normal construction equipment activities. A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions is expected due to construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Noise disturbance would be limited to general construction equipment activities and would be for a short duration.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No hazardous conditions are known to exist. Completion of this project would increase worker safety while driving in the corridor as well as stability and reliability to the service area.

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: Underlying and surrounding landowners would be notified and coordinated with in advance of the proposed project. A public meeting was held to share details and provide the public with an opportunity to ask questions and provide comments. BPA would continue landowner coordination prior to and during project construction activities.

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

Signed: /s/ Jonnel Deacon

Jonnel Deacon
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: March 3, 2025