

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** FY22-FY24 Idaho Falls Priority Poles Replacement Project

**Transmission project bundle number:** P05054

**PP&A No.:** 6767

**Project Manager:** Jodie Anderson, TEPL-TPP-1

**Location:** Bonneville, Butte, Cassia, Custer, Gem, Madison and Minidoka Counties, 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 replace in-kind wood pole structures and associated structural/electrical components (e.g., cross arms, insulators, guy anchors, etc.) along the multiple transmission lines in the Idaho Falls TLM District.

Approximately 16 wood pole structures along six different transmission lines would be replaced. After current pole structures are removed, replacement poles would be placed within approximately 5 feet ahead or back on line from the existing structure. Where needed, the project also includes improvements to existing access roads and landings associated with the transmission line rights-of-way that currently may inhibit access at the specified locations for routine maintenance. Dependent on the structure location and access road conditions, the project may include surface improvements of existing access roads and landings (blading and rocking) as well as improvements and in-kind replacements of existing drainage features. Sixteen approximately 50-foot by 50-foot landings may be constructed at each structure location.

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 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.

/s/ Greg Tippetts

Greg Tippetts

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: April 8, 2025

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

<sup>1</sup> BPA is aware that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), on February 25, 2025, issued an interim final rule to remove its NEPA implementing regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500–1508. Based on CEQ guidance, and to promote completion of its NEPA review in a timely manner and without delay, in this CX BPA is voluntarily relying on the CEQ regulations, in addition to DOE's own regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021, to meet its 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:** FY22-FY24 Idaho Falls Priority Poles Replacement Project.

### **Project Site Description**

All structure replacements would be at specific locations in Cassia, Custer, Bonneville, Butte, and Madison, Counties, Idaho in BPA's Idaho Falls Maintenance District. All work would be done in existing managed rights-of-ways. Underlying land uses include Bureau of Land Management (BLM), State land, Bureau of Reclamation, and private agricultural lands. Site-specific locations and details are listed in table 1.

**Table 1. Structure replacements in the Idaho Falls District.**

Transmission Line	Structure	TRS	County/State	Land Management
Spar Canyon-Round Valley No. 1	4/1, 4/5	ID T12N R20E SEC25	Custer, ID	BLM rangeland
	4/8	ID T12N R20E SEC24	Custer, ID	BLM rangeland
	6/6	ID T12N R20E SEC14	Custer, ID	BLM rangeland
Lost River-Spar Canyon No. 1	21/1	ID T7N R24E SEC13	Custer, ID	BLM rangeland
	27/7	ID T8N R23E SEC25	Custer, ID	Private Agriculture
	40/2	ID T9N R22E SEC16	Custer, ID	State Lands, rangeland
Antelope-Lost River.	8/1	ID T5N R26E SEC35	Butte, ID	BLM rangeland
	9/4	ID T5N R26E SEC23	Butte, ID	BLM rangeland
	10/5, 10/6	ID T5N R26E SEC14	Butte, ID	BLM rangeland
	11/3	ID T5N R26E SEC11	Butte, ID	BLM rangeland
Minidoka PH-Unity No. 1	16/1	ID T11S R25E SEC6	Cassia, ID	Private Agriculture
	23/11	ID T11S R23E SEC12	Cassia, ID	Private Agriculture
Swan Valley-Goshen No. 1	29/6	ID T2N R39E SEC27	Bonneville, ID	Private Agriculture
Goshen-Drummond No. 1	56/10	ID T6N R41E SEC1	Madison, ID	Private Agriculture

### **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

#### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No

**Explanation:**

Pursuant to Executive Order 14156 "Declaring a National Energy Emergency" and the regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (36 CFR 800), BPA notified the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP); the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO); the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation; and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes on March 20 that the replacement of the structures was an emergency and requested a response by March 31, 2025, in compliance

with 36 CFR 800.12. BPA noted that no previously identified cultural resources are located within the area of potential effects of any of the project locations and that a cultural resources survey would be conducted after each structure was replaced to identify any cultural resources that may be present. BPA staff also used proprietary oblique imagery to examine each structure location for any obvious cultural resources that may be present and none were identified. Based on BPA's review, the likelihood of encountering a cultural resources site would be low is not likely to affect historic properties. The SHPO responded on March 20, 2025, to request that the information be uploaded electronically. On March 26, 2025, the ACHP responded to note the measures BPA had taken to identify cultural resources and remind BPA that the SHPO and Tribes would also need to be notified. No additional responses were received.

Notes:

- 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. 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.

## **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All wood pole replacements would be in-kind and would be placed near the locations of 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: BPA obtained official species lists Under Section 7 of the ESA, from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for the project areas on April 3, 2025. No ESA-listed plant species are present in the project areas. No federal special-status, state listed, or BLM sensitive plants are present in the project areas.

However, if any federal or state listed plant species are unknowingly in the project area, project activities would be limited to the already impacted right-of-way and access roads and would not substantially alter existing plant communities

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA obtained official species lists Under Section 7 of the ESA, from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for the project locations in Custer, Butte, Cassia, Bonneville, and Madison Counties, Idaho on April 3, 2025. Work would occur in areas maintained as an open transmission line corridor with little wildlife habitat. During project activities, work with heavy equipment may cause temporary disturbance to wildlife causing avoidance of the area. The disturbance would be of a short duration and would not affect any species' long-term activities.

No project locations are within or near any designated critical habitats on known occupied sites for listed species. Due to the lack suitable habitat and no known presence in the project areas, BPA has determined that the projects would have “no effect” on ESA-listed species or their critical habitat. No other special-status wildlife would be impacted by project activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No in-water work or ground disturbance near waterways or any ESA-listed fish streams is planned. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized to stabilize the project sites during and after the maintenance activities.

## **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are documented within the project area. Additionally, no documented wetlands are within the influence of the project sites.

## **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.

## **8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project locations are confined to the existing transmission line right-of-way corridors and off right-of-way access roads with legal rights. Surrounding land uses include BLM, State land, Bureau of Reclamation, and private agricultural lands. BLM and State land consists of open rangeland. The Bureau of Reclamation site is located adjacent to a small substation and dam complex. The project would not permanently impact public land uses and no recreational areas would be impacted. Project work locations would be localized to the existing wood pole transmission structure and would not significantly impact the underlying properties. Project locations do not include any specially-designated areas.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed actions at existing facilities would not alter or effect visual quality. Structure replacements are in-kind and access road improvement work would occur on existing roads. The project would not result in a noticeable visual change from the existing structures and access roads.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project work would be of 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: The project would be located away from any populated areas. Noise disturbance would be limited to general construction equipment activities, would be for a short duration, and would occur during daylight hours.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is considered normal construction and maintenance. 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 notified and coordinated with the landowners/managers in advance of the construction of the proposed project. The BPA realty specialist has been in contact with the public land managers and they were 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/ Greg Tippetts                      Date: April 8, 2025  
Greg Tippetts  
Physical Scientist (Environmental)