

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: FY22-FY24 The Dalles (Chenoweth-Goldendale) Priority Poles Replacement Project

Transmission project bundle number: P05085

PP&A No.: 6738

Project Manager: Alla Kirsanova, TEPL-TPP-1

Location: Klickitat County, Washington

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, ect.) along the Chenoweth-Goldendale transmission line in The Dalles TLM District.

Two wood pole structures along the Chenowith-Goldendale 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. Two 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; 89 FR 34074, April 30, 2024), 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



Greg Tippetts
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

¹ 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: The Dalles (Chenoweth-Goldendale) Priority Poles Replacement Project

Project Site Description

Both structure replacements would be at specific locations in Klickitat County, Washington in BPA's The Dalles Maintenance District. All work would be done in existing managed rights-of-ways. Underlying land uses are private rangeland. The site-specific locations and details are listed in table 1.

Table 1. Structure replacements in The Dalles District.

Transmission Line	Structure	TRS	County/State	Land Management
Chenoweth - Goldendale No. 1	5/1	WA T2N R13E SEC14	Klickitat, WA	Private Rangeland
	13/4	WA T13N R14E SEC14	Klickitat, WA	Private Rangeland

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA Historic Preservation Program archaeologists reviewed the results of previous cultural resources investigations conducted within and adjacent to the proposed project and completed a field investigation in March 2025. Although portions of the Chenoweth-Goldendale project are located within the boundaries of an archaeological district, no archaeological resources have been identified within or adjacent to any of the proposed project areas and BPA has determined that the proposed project would have no adverse effects on the archaeological district. BPA has determined that the Chenoweth-Goldendale No. 1 transmission line is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places; however, BPA has determined that the undertaking would not adversely affect the eligible transmission lines. On March 31, 2025, BPA made a determination that the project would have no adverse effect to historic properties. No responses were received from the consulting parties -- the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Nez Perce Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, and the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation -- within 30 days.

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: Some minor crushing or removal of existing vegetation could occur along the edges of access roads or surrounding transmission line structures. BPA obtained official species lists Under Section 7 of the ESA, from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for the project areas on May 6, 2025. No ESA-listed plant species, federal special-status species, or state listed species 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 Klickitat County, Washington on April 6, 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 or 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 are private rangeland. The project would not impact public land including any recreational areas. 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 in advance of the construction of the proposed project.

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

Signed:



Greg Tippetts
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: May 8, 2025