

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: FY21 North Bend Pole Replacement and Access Road Project

PP&A No.: 6734

Project Manager: James Barnhart - TEPL-TPP-1

Location: Curry, Douglas, and Lane counties, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance; B1.13 Pathways, short access roads, and rail lines

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is proposing to replace three deteriorating wood pole structures and associated hardware and guy wires on the Wendson-Tahkenitch No. 1 transmission line and the Rogue-Gold Beach No. 2 lines. The proposed project would include the following work elements:

- Replacement of two wood pole transmission structures (in-kind) on the Wendson-Tahkenitch No. 1 transmission line, structure 16/1 and Rogue-Gold Beach No. 2 transmission line, structure 4/2.
- Replacement of the wood pole structure, Wendson-Tahkenitch No. 1 transmission line, structure 4/1, with a light duty steel structure, of the same three pole configuration in the same location.
- Improvement of about 1.5 miles of existing access road (minor blading, grading, and rocking of access road segments that have become impassable.) All road maintenance would take place in the existing road prism.
- Improvement of three equipment landings (50 feet x 50 feet).
- Danger tree removal and side limbing would occur for access road maintenance to allow for vehicle access. Woody debris would be chipped and/or scattered onsite and allowed to decompose naturally.

If needed, additional project work may include: grading and shaping of existing equipment landings and roads, installation of geotextile material, placement of crushed rock, compacting road surface, and maintenance of drainage features.

The work would occur in the late summer of 2025 through the fall 2026 and would be done using conventional utility line and construction equipment and techniques. Work would not occur during the critical breeding season of Northern Spotted Owl and Marbled Murrelet (March 1 – August 5).

The proposed action would allow safe and timely access to the transmission line, which would help reduce outage times and maintain the safety and reliability of power infrastructure in the

region. All work would be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA standards. 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/ Steven D. Selser

Steven D. Selser

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange

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NEPA Compliance Officer Date: May 13, 2025

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.

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Project Site Description

The proposed project would be in Curry, Douglas, and Lane counties, Oregon. The proposed work locations are within BPA's easement of the right-of-way (ROW) which consists of low growing shrubs and trees adjacent to older forested land. The access road Wendson-Tahkenitch No. 1, structure 4/1, passes through forestland.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with a no effect to historic resources determination to the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua & Siuslaw Indians, the Coquille Indian Tribe, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office on May 25, 2023. The Coquille Indian Tribe provided concurrence with the determination via an email dated June 1, 2023. No additional response was received within 30 days.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Structure replacement would be placed in the same location as the existing structures. Minor auguring of the existing holes may be necessary. The proposed roadway improvements would reduce erosion and degradation of the existing access roads. All disturbed soils outside of the road prism would be seeded with a native seed mix appropriate for the region, and mulched, to further stabilize soils. No prime or unique farmlands would be affected. Therefore, the proposed action would have limited temporary impacts to geology and soils.

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 access road and transmission line right-of-way and would not substantially alter existing plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A species list for the project location was acquired from USFWS on April 18, 2025, and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's sensitive species list was reviewed. There are no known or modeled Northern spotted owl or marbled murrelet nest sites or core habitat within 110 yards of the project site, therefore No Threatened or Endangered or special status wildlife species or their habitat would be affected by the action. Temporary wildlife disturbance from noise would occur during maintenance activities.

One documented State of Oregon special-status species, the red tree vole, or habitat is present to the project area. However, no large trees, would be removed; therefore, the project would not affect the species or its habitat.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no waterbodies, floodplains, or fish habitat present within the proposed work area.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: Project areas are located in uplands and project activities do not have the potential to impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No excavation would occur at depths that would intersect groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially - Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use is proposed as part of the project. No specially - designated areas were identified within the project limits. The project would not result in changes or impacts to land use or specially - designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be performed within existing transmission line right-of-way and access road prisms. Replacement of the wood poles and associated components would be in kind and replaced in the same location; therefore, there would not be a change to the visual

quality of the area. At Wendson – Tahkenitch No 1 transmission line 4/1, replacing the 3 pole wood structure with light duty steel structure would not significantly alter the viewshed as they would be in the same location and style as the current structure.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

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

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours.

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: All activities have been coordinated with landowners.

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

Signed: /s/ Steven D. Selser

Steven D. Selser

Date: May 13, 2025

Physical Scientist (Environmental)