

**Categorical Exclusion Determination**  
Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Grizzly – Captain Jack No. 1 Access Road Maintenance and Ross – Malin Fiber Line Repair

**PP&A No.:** 4776

**Project Manager:** Rusty Ludt – TEPL-TPP-1

**Location:** Klamath County, Oregon

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B1.3 Routine Maintenance.

**Description of the Proposed Action:** The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to repair fiber cable on the Grizzly – Captain Jack No. 1 transmission line between structures 130/2 to 133/5, 137/3 to 141/2, and 143/2 to 146/2 (about 10 Miles of fiber in total). The fiber line is known as the Ross – Malin Fiber Line. The project would replace damaged fiber. Pull tension areas would be located between the following spans: 130/1 to 130/2, 133/5 to 134/1, 143/1 to 143/2 and 146/2 to 146/3. Depending on the current topography of each pull tension area, the site may be graded to provide a level staging surface. Pull-tension equipment would be parked within these selected locations. The work would include the use of heavy equipment including bulldozer, transmission stringing equipment, bucket trucks, work trucks and trailers, and use of a drone to provide assistance in sock line installation. The proposed work is necessary to ensure power grid reliability.

Accessing the project work area to perform the repair would require reconstructing about 17 miles of existing access roads between line miles 121 and 146. This would include grading and compacting existing road surface as well as hauling, placing, and shaping of additional crushed rock. Road maintenance would also include placement of water bars. Landing reconstruction would be required at approximately 66 existing landings within project area to achieve a 30 foot by 40 foot footprint. General equipment used for this type of roadwork includes: graders, rollers, bulldozers, and dump trucks. The access road improvements would preserve and repair the existing road, maintain roadway safety, and manage storm water run-off. Landings may require debris removal, leveling, and surface rocking.

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.<sup>1</sup>

/s/ Greg Tippetts  
Greg Tippetts  
Environmental Scientist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange  
Katey Grange  
NEPA Compliance Officer                      Date: June 11, 2025

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

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<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:** Grizzly-Captain Jack No. 1 Access Road Maintenance and Ross – Malin Fiber Line Repair

### **Project Site Description**

The site is located on the Fremont Winema National Forest (Fremont Winema NF) from structures 130/2 to 133/5 and on private land from structures 143/2 to 146/2. Nearby land uses include forest management, rangeland, and passive recreation. Vegetation within the right-of-way corridor is maintained as a low-growing plant community of mainly grasses and small shrubs. Topography is gently sloping with a mix of plateaus and canyons.

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

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

Potential for Significance: Yes

**Explanation:** BPA initiated consultation with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), United States Forest Service Fremont Winema National Forest (Fremont Winema NF), Oregon Parks and Recreation Department (OPRD), the Burns Paiute Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (CTWSRO), the Fort Bidwell Indian Community of the Fort Bidwell Reservation of California, and the Klamath Tribes on February 23, 2022. The project was assigned a SHPO Case number on March 16, 2022, and the CTWSRO responded to consultation on March 24, 2022. BPA consulted on a determination of adverse effect on December 12, 2022, and updated determinations of eligibility for individual resources on January 12, 2023, and February 10, 2023. The SHPO, Fremont Winema NF, OPRD, Burns Paiute Tribe, Fort Bidwell Indian Community, and Klamath Tribes engaged in negotiations of a Memorandum of Agreement to mitigate for adverse effects, which was executed on May 08, 2023.

On November 15, 2023, BPA enlarged the Area of Potential Effects upon realization that the repair of the fiber optic line would require equipment to be driven outside of the original APE. The original APE only included existing access roads. Additionally, BPA submitted a Post-Discovery Assessment Report for the discovery of new resources during the reconstruction of the access roads. A BPA contractor conducted a pedestrian survey of the updated APE and recorded 22 new archaeological sites and 20 isolated finds.

On March 24, 2025, BPA reinitiated consultation for the proposed project modifications with the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Indians, the Confederated Tribes of the Klamath Indians, the Burns-Paiute Tribe, the Fort Bidwell Indian Community, OPRD, the Fremont Winema NF, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. The consultation was based on a report summarizing the results of archaeological inventory, determinations of eligibility for 48 resources, and a determination of no adverse effect as per §36 CFR 800.5(b). No responses from the consulted parties to the March 24, 2025, determination of eligibility letter were received within the 30-day consultation period that ended on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

Several Mitigation implementation measures outlined in the eligibility letter would be incorporated into the project activities to avoid impacts to resources. Mitigation measures are detailed in the Mitigation Implementation Table (MIT) submitted with this determination, and include, timing restrictions, specific equipment to be used, avoidance work practices, tribal monitors, and flagging of resources during the project.

In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA would 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: Localized soil disturbance would occur during access road maintenance activities, landing work and fiber stringing. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized as necessary to prevent soils from migrating off site. All disturbed sites would be restored and vegetated with native species at the completion of the work.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status plants are present. Project activities would crush and disturb vegetation within work areas, but overall, the work would not substantially alter existing plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status species were identified within the project area. Project activities would temporarily disturb local wildlife during construction, but the disturbance would be limited to the already impacted transmission line right-of-way and access roads and would not substantially alter the long-term footprint or operational noise of the transmission line; therefore, wildlife and associated habitat would not be affected in the long term.

## **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 proposed for this project. 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: None present in the project area.

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project excavation activities are not expected to reach a depth to impact groundwater or aquifers.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not result in permanent changes or impacts to land use. The project area includes sections on public lands. Public lands are open to recreational use such as hiking, hunting, and ORV use. The proposed project areas would be closed for public use during the work activities, but there are numerous alternate recreational lands in the area that would be available during the short construction period. No long-term restrictions for public use are anticipated. Impacts to public recreational use are expected to be negligible.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be performed within existing transmission system rights-of-way and access road and would be consistent with the existing viewshed.

## **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.

## **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 system 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 private landowners. BPA Realty and archeologist have been in contact with USFS and most recently at the annual BPA and USFS annual coordination meeting held in January 2023.

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  
Greg Tippetts  
Environmental Scientist

Date: June 11, 2025