

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: FY22-FY24 The Dalles (Hood River-The Dalles) Priority Poles Replacement Project

Transmission project bundle number: P05085

PP&A No.: 6738

Project Manager: Alla Kirsanova, TEPL-TPP-1

Location: Wasco County, Oregon

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 Hood River-The Dalles transmission line in The Dalles TLM District.

Two wood pole structures along the Hood River-The Dalles 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. Two approximately 50-foot by 50-foot landings may be constructed at each structure location. No access road improvements would be needed for the pole replacements.

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 C. Grange

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: June 20, 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.

Proposed Action: The Dalles (Hood River-The Dalles) Priority Poles Replacement Project.

Project Site Description

Both structure replacements would be at specific locations in Wasco County, Oregon in BPA's The Dalles Maintenance District. All work would be done in existing managed rights-of-ways. Underlying land uses are private rural forested. The proposed project locations are within the Columbia River George National Scenic area and designated as (GMA) F-1 land use. 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 |
|--------------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Hood River-The Dalles | 5/7 | OR T2N R11E SEC10 | Wasco, OR | Private Rural Forested |
| | 6/4 | OR T2N R11E SEC10 | Wasco, OR | Private Rural Forested |

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In-kind wood pole replacement, and reconstruction and improvements of existing access roads, have the potential to disturb surface soils within the proposed work areas. BPA Historic Preservation Program archaeologists reviewed the results of previous cultural resources investigations conducted within the Area of Potential Effect for the proposed project. BPA initiated consultation and sent a no historic properties affected determination to the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs on May 12, 2025. No responses were received 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

and landing improvements. 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 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 Wasco County, Oregon on April 11th, 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 with legal rights. Surrounding land uses are private forestland. 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. The proposed project locations are within the Columbia River George National Scenic Area (CRGNSA) and designated as (GMA) F-1 land use. The project would not be subject to the CRGNSA management plan as the project would be maintenance and is covered under the BPA Savings Provision. BPA coordinated with the USFS Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area office in June 2025.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions would be to existing facilities and would not alter or affect visual quality. Structure replacements are in-kind. The project would not result in a noticeable visual change from the existing structures.

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. BPA coordinated with the USFS Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area office in June 2025.

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: June 20, 2025
Greg Tippetts
Physical Scientist (Environmental)