

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Washington DNR Bonneville Ross No. 1/N Bonneville-Troutdale No. 1 Access Road Use Request

Project No.: LURR 20250268

Project Manager: Billie Woodman – TERR-ROSS-MHQA

Location: Clark County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA would allow the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to use approximately 0.8 mile of BPA's existing access road within BPA ROW on fee-owned property. The project area runs along the North Bonneville-Ross No. 1/North Bonneville-Troutdale No. 1 line from Tower 18/6 on the west to between Tower 18/2 and 18/1 on the east. DNR would use the access roads for hauling rock and wood products to and from a timber harvest area adjacent to the south side of the BPA ROW. No access road work or other ground disturbing work would take place within the project area.

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

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.

Douglas Corkran
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

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 project area is located in Southwest Washington approximately eight miles east of the City of Vancouver on a ridge of the north slope of the Washougal River valley. The project area features an existing access road that crosses rolling terrain sloping east towards the Cougar Creek valley. The area is heavily vegetated upland with a mix of industrial forest land and rural residential areas.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbing work would take place, thus no impacts to cultural or historic resources would occur. BPA cultural resources staff made a determination of No Potential to Cause Effects (NPCE) to historic properties on June 3, 2025.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbing work would take place and no soils would be transported or disturbed. The existing road is well-graveled. The area surrounding the access roads are heavily vegetated and any potential sediment or runoff caused by the additional log and dump truck traffic would be captured immediately. There would be no impact to geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No vegetation removal would take place as part of this project. There would be no impact to plants.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The only potential impact to wildlife species would be from noise and disturbance from log and dump trucks passing through the project area. A review of the project area found no species listed under the Endangered Species Act were documented in or near the project area and suitable habitat for them is limited. The timber harvest area just south of the project area may contain suitable dispersal and foraging habitat for northern spotted owls, but this area would be harvested by DNR and would thus not represent suitable habitat at the time of road use. Other areas nearby do not contain suitable spotted owl habitat. Common wildlife species use the project area and may be disturbed by log and

dump truck traffic, but these impacts would be short lived, temporary, and there is abundant adjacent suitable habitat. Overall the project would have low impacts to wildlife.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is located in an upland area with no direct connections to water bodies. No streams or drainages are crossed by the access roads in the project area. Cougar Creek is located downhill to the east of the project area approximately 0.25 miles but the area between the road and the creek is heavily vegetated so any sediment or runoff would be captured before it nears the creek. The proposed project would have no impact to water bodies, floodplains or fish.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is in an upland area without any large wetlands. Some smaller wetlands may be present next to or near the project area, but because the log and dump trucks would remain on the existing well-maintained gravel road, no impacts to any wetlands are expected.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The area is located on higher ground with no significant groundwater or aquifers nearby. No refueling or other hazardous material use would occur within the project area. The proposed project would have no impact to groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No specially-designated areas exist in or adjacent to the project area. The existing land uses of transmission line ROW and access roads would remain the same. The proposed project would have no impact on land use or specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No tree clearing or ground disturbing work would be a part of this project (tree clearing would be part of the timber harvest conducted by DNR but is separate from this project). Log and dump trucks may be noticeable traveling along the access roads within the project area from nearby residences, but any visual impacts from this would be temporary and transient. The proposed project would have no to low impacts on visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some minor fugitive dust and diesel emissions from log and dump trucks traveling through the project area would occur. These impacts would be temporary and transient. No long-term or continuing dust or emissions would occur due to the project. The proposed project would have low impacts to air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Noise from log and dump trucks traveling through the project area would occur. These impacts would be temporary and transient. No long-term or continuing noise would occur due to the project. The proposed project would have low impacts to noise.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The existing access road is gated; thus public use is limited or non-existent. The additional truck traffic is not expected to increase risk to other users of the road. BPA would not allow the use of hazardous chemicals or materials on BPA property; Spill kits would be required to be available during use of BPA property. Any spills on BPA property would need to be remediated immediately and reported to BPA. The proposed project would have no impact to human health and safety.

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: DNR would notify adjacent landowners about the larger timber harvest project as per their regulations.

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

Signed:

Douglas Corkran
Environmental Protection Specialist