

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Dworshak-Taft NF 445 (Hanaker Ck Rd) and NF 507 (Bullion Ck Rd) Access Road Maintenance.

Project No.: 6862

Project Manager: Robert Zeller – TFSF-Bell

Location: Mineral County, MT and Shoshone County, ID

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

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to conduct routine maintenance on an access road that is between line miles 79 and 83 on the Dworshak-Taft transmission line. Specifically, the project would be approximately 4 miles in the Lolo and Idaho Panhandle National Forests beginning on NF-445 Hanaker Ck Rd and ending on NF-507 Bullion Ck Rd. BPA proposes to conduct the following activities to maintain road surface integrity – light road grading to include smoothing, reshaping, filling irregularities not to impact any native soil beneath imported fill, clearing vegetation and debris from four cross-drain culvers, replace one damaged cross-drain culvert with same diameter that would not require excavation greater than the original culvert, repair existing water bars, drain dips. Rock would be added to existing road surfaces and to fill potholes. The actions would occur on existing access roads where BPA possesses an agreed upon easement. The access roads possess a well-defined and established prism and travel surface that includes a rock base and surface. The proposed maintenance activities would not require or include the construction of new access roads, drainage features or other new ground disturbing activities beyond those areas previously disturbed in the established road prism. No in water or wetland work is proposed with this activity.

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 1021.102 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; 90 FR 29676, July 3, 2025 [Interim Final Rule]) and *DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Implementing Procedures* (dated June 30, 2025), BPA has determined the following:

- 1) The proposed action fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021;
- 2) The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion; and
- 3) There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal (see attached Environmental Evaluation).

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review. ¹

/s/ Adrienne Wojtasz

Adrienne Wojtasz
Physical Scientist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: July 9, 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 the interim final rule to revise DOE NEPA regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021 and NEPA Implementing Procedures (dated June 30, 2025), 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: Dworshak-Taft NF 445 (Hanaker Ck Rd) and NF 507 (Bullion Ck Rd) Access Road Maintenance.

Project Site Description

The proposed project area is located in the Idaho Panhandle National Forest in Shoshone County, ID and the Lolo National Forest in Mineral County MT. The area is predominantly second growth forest. Because of the steepness of the terrain, drainages along the project are mostly ephemeral with only a few exhibiting stream characteristics such as beds and banks.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA Archaeologist reviewed the project and developed an Area of Potential Effects for project activities, followed by background research through the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (MT SHPO) and Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (ID SHPO) online databases. BPA initiated consultation with the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, Nez Perce Tribe, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, and the Idaho Historic Preservation Office on November 12, 2024, The MT SHPO concurred on December 20, 2024, and the Idaho SHPO concurred on November 15, 2025, that the project as described would have no adverse effect to historic properties. No other responses were received.

Notes:

- BPA's Post-Review Discovery Procedures would be included as a condition of BPA's environmental clearance. In the event that cultural material is unexpectedly encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA would require that work be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they could be inspected and assessed by a professional archaeologist.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Predominantly, ground disturbing activities would occur on existing roads and subsequently rocked.

Notes: The following minimization measures would be implemented.

- During construction all appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be used to implement site specific erosion and sediment control.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Road work would occur on an existing access road that is largely graveled and unvegetated.

In order to comply with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), on June 27, 2025, BPA obtained an official species list for the project from USFWS. Whitebark pine is listed as threatened within the project area. However, no vegetation management or tree removal is planned, therefore the project would have “No Effect” on Whitebark pine. No other Federal/state special-status plants are present in the project area.

On National Forest System lands managed by the Idaho Panhandle and Lolo National Forests, BPA would comply with the Standard Operating Procedures for limiting the spread of invasive species and fire prevention as directed in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA).

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In general, the project would have temporary impacts to wildlife and habitat related to disturbance associated with the equipment noise and human presence. However, the surrounding mountains and forest provide ample habitat and cover for disturbed wildlife. The project would have no effect to ESA-listed species. No impacts to state sensitive species or Forest Service sensitive species are anticipated.

Project activities would be limited to already impacted access road and would not substantially alter the footprint or operational noise of the access road; therefore, wildlife and associated habitat would be temporarily disturbed by noise during construction, but there would be no long-term effect.

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. There are no fish in the vicinity of the project area. 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.

Notes: The following minimization measures would be implemented to prevent sediment or contaminants from reaching any waterbodies.

- Erosion control measures would be implemented to prevent sedimentation from reaching any nearby waterbody.
- Appropriately stocked spill response kits would be located on vehicles, and other equipment.
- All culvert work to be performed during the dry season.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbing activities are anticipated in wetlands or other water bodies that occur along the project. Erosion control measures would be implemented to prevent sedimentation (see Notes under #5, Waterbodies, Floodplains, and Fish above).

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to ground water or aquifers are anticipated due to the minimal amount of ground disturbance that would not be deep enough to penetrate groundwater.

Notes: The following minimization measures would be implemented to minimize groundwater contamination potential.

- Appropriately socked spill response kits would be located on vehicles, and other equipment.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use would occur and project activities would not impact existing land uses. Work would be staged to allow continued road use through construction.

In the Idaho Panhandle and Lolo National Forests, the Memorandum of Understanding between the Bonneville Power Administration United States Department of Energy and the United States Forest Service United States Department of Agriculture Regarding Transmission Facilities and Access to Those Facilities on National Forest System Lands Standard Operation Procedures listed below would be implemented:

- Section V Transmission Facilities
- Section X Fire control communication and coordination
- Appendix E Fire Prevention and Suppression

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have a minimal impact to visual quality. The proposed work is on existing roads and would be visually consistent with the existing transmission line corridor and transportation system.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small amount of vehicle emissions and dust may occur temporarily during construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some temporary construction noise from construction activities would occur during daylight hours.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to human, health, and safety are anticipated. The proposed action would allow safe and timely access to the transmission line which would help reduce outage times and maintain reliable power to 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 personnel and environmental specialist have coordinated the proposed project activities with the Lolo and the Idaho Panhandle National Forest prior to project initiation and any concerns regarding proposed access road maintenance activities have been addressed.

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

Signed: /s/ Adrienne Wojtasz
Adrienne Wojtasz
Physical Scientist

Date: July 9, 2025