Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: Raver-Echo Lake No. 1 Impairment Excavation

PP&A No.: 6636

Project Manager: Debbie Miller – TELC-TPP-3

Location: King County, Washington

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 excavate ground impairments on the Raver-Echo Lake No. 1 transmission line at two locations along the line. BPA owns and operates the Raver-Echo Lake No. 1 500kv transmission line, which runs north from Raver Substation to Echo Lake Substation east of Maple Valley in Washington. The energized conductor at the project sites is supported by single circuit lattice steel suspension towers. BPA has identified two ground impairments at line mile 3 and mile 12. Impairments are locations where the distance between the ground surface and the energized conductor does not meet safety and reliability standards. At these locations, BPA proposes to excavate below the impairment using heavy machinery. The ground would be excavated and re-graded to blend with existing contours. Exposed soils would be seeded and mulched. Excess material would be spread on-site in the transmission right-of-way, seeded, and stabilized or hauled away for off-site disposal. Proposed excavation volumes at the impairment sites range from approximately 160 cubic yards at span 3/2 and 200 cubic yards at span 12/1. In total, approximately 360 cubic yards of material would be excavated from work locations totaling approximately 0.3 acre (12,000 square feet). The work sites would be seeded with a climate appropriate native seed mix, mulched, and monitored to ensure that the sites remain stabilized and revegetate.

In addition to the impairment excavation, BPA proposes to improve access roads to support the work. BPA access roads are typically 12 to 14 feet in width and comprised of dirt, two track roads, or compacted rock. Proposed road work would include approximately 200 feet of improvements, which consists of light blading, the addition of rock, and compaction.

All work would be conducted within the existing high-voltage corridor and on existing easements. Equipment generally used for this work includes an excavator, backhoe, blader, dump trucks, roller-compactor, and light duty trucks. The work would be completed in late summer and fall of 2025.

“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/ *Kylie Porter*
Kylie Porter
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ *Katey Grange*
Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer Date: *July 10, 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: Raver-Echo Lake No. 1 Impairment Excavation

Project Site Description

The proposed action is located in the Western Cascades Lowlands and Valleys and Eastern Puget Uplands. The Western Cascades Lowlands and Valleys are characterized by steep ridges and narrow valleys with elevations generally less than 3200ft. Wet, mild climate results in forests dominated by Douglas-fir and western hemlock. The Eastern Puget Uplands is a zone of transition with rolling moraines and foothills. It is characterized by a mild maritime climate because of the proximity to the Puget Sound. The Project Area is located on state land managed by the Washington Department of National Resources and privately owned land.

The proposed action would occur within, and immediately adjacent to, BPA rights-of-way (ROW) and access roads for the Raver-Echo Lake No. 1 transmission line. BPA does not own the property on which the transmission line is located but rather has easement rights to operate and maintain the transmission lines and access roads. The cleared transmission corridor is approximately 530 ft. wide at the impairment site at 3/2 where it shares the corridor with other BPA lines and approximately 300 ft. wide at the 12/1 site. Vegetation in the corridor is periodically managed to remove tall-growing tree species and promote low-growing grasses and shrubs. The topography ranges from relatively flat, to hilly moving towards the Echo Lake Substation. Elevation in the proposed work locations generally ranges from approximately 900 ft. at impairment site 3/2 to 1000 ft. at impairment site 12/1. Land use near 3/2 is generally residential, while the northern portion of the work at impairment site 12/1 near Echo Lake Substation is generally more remote with rural residential and timber land use. Approximately 400 feet south of impairment site 12/1 there is a wetland and approximately 400 feet northeast there is Raging River, a stream with ESA fish species.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation on December 2,2024 with the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, and the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. On December 4th, 2024, DAHP concurred with the delineated APE and assigned the project DAHP Log No. 2024-12-08672-BPA. On December 21, 2025, the Snoqualmie Tribe responded, requesting that an archaeological review be conducted, and that the tribe be contacted if an archaeological survey is performed. BPA Cultural staff coordinated with the tribe to have a representative present during the survey. No other responses were received.

BPA sent a no adverse effect to historic resources determination on May 20, 2025, and DAHP concurred on May 20, 2025. No additional response was received within 30 days.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Excavation and soil disturbance would be required to excavate ground impairments at those locations with ground clearance issues. Maximum excavation depth would be approximately 1 to 5 feet. Upon project completion, disturbed soils would be seeded with a native erosion control seed mix and stabilized with straw or hydro-mulch. Excess soils would be spread on site and stabilized with seed and straw.

Notes:

- Work site footprints would be minimized as much as possible to avoid soil disturbance.
- Upon project completion, disturbed, un-rocked soils would be stabilized with native erosion control grass seed and mulched with straw, or hydroseeded.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Local plants would be disturbed at the impairment excavation locations as equipment is mobilized and the ground is excavated. Vegetation would also be disturbed in those locations where excess material is spread. However, work area footprint would be limited to the existing transmission right-of-way corridor and minimized as much as possible at the work site locations. Upon project completion, the area would be re-graded to match existing contours and seeded with a native seed mix.

In accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), BPA obtained a species list from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service IPAC website on April 8, 2025. No ESA-listed plants or habitat are present in the project area; therefore, the project would have "No Effect" on ESA-listed plant species.

BPA reviewed available data sources, and no special-status state species are documented in the project area.

Notes:

- Work site footprints would be minimized as much as possible to avoid impacts to local plants.
- Upon project completion, disturbed, un-rocked soils would be stabilized with native erosion control grass seed and mulched with straw, or hydroseeded.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Local wildlife such as small to midsized mammals and birds could be disturbed by project activities, assuming they are present in the project area. However, disturbance would be temporary, and the surrounding landscape provides ample habitat and cover for displaced animals.

In accordance with the ESA, BPA obtained a species list from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service IPAC website on April 8, 2025. No ESA-listed species or critical habitat are present in the project area; therefore, the project would have "No Effect" on ESA species.

The project is located within a Spotted Owl Management Zone classified by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW). However, from a review of the Spotted Owl data in the Northwest Forest Plan (NWFP), there is no suitable or highly suitable habitat present in a quarter mile of the project. Northern spotted owl was not present on the official U.S. Fish and Wildlife IPAC Species List.
No special-statues state animal species are documented in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The impairment at 12/1 is approximately 400 feet from Raging River, a stream that has ESA species and designated critical habitat. No in-water work is planned, so there would be no direct significant impacts to waterbodies and floodplains. Best management practices would be employed to prevent sediment from reaching the river.

Notes:

- Stormwater best management practices would be implemented during construction, and sites would be monitored to ensure revegetation goals are met.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is a wetland located 400 feet south of the impairment site at 12/1. No proposed project excavation or fill are located in the wetlands, and no direct impacts to wetlands are proposed. The disturbance associated with the proposed project would be contained on site and best management practices would be used during construction to prevent sediment from migrating off site during ground-disturbing activities and impacting the wetland.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No excavation would extend to depths that would impact groundwater or aquifers

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project work sites are located on rural residential, private forested lands, and forest land managed by the Washington Department of Natural Resources. Primary land use is high-voltage transmission corridor. The proposed project would not alter existing land use and is not located in a specially-designated area.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Excavation of ground impairments would remove existing vegetation and soils, resulting in visible disturbed rocks and soils. Excess material would be spread in the surrounding area. All disturbed soil cuts and fills would be re-contoured to match existing grades as much as possible, seeded with a native seed, and mulched to restore vegetation. Therefore, the proposed project would not significantly change the existing visual character of the area, which is dominated by the high voltage transmission corridor and transmission structures and would remain so after project completion.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some minor, local impacts to air quality would occur due to construction activity and vehicular traffic; however, impacts would be temporary and insignificant. Work areas are

generally located in remote places, without many human receptors. Work would be completed in one to two weeks per location.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction activity would generate noise. However, impacts would be local and relatively minor, and transitory in duration. All project activity would occur during daylight hours, and work areas are generally located in remote places, without many human receptors.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have benefits to human health and safety, as the purpose of the project is to restore safety and reliability clearance standards currently affected by the line impairments.

Notes:

- Prior to the start of the project, work crews would identify and discuss the job hazards and safety concerns and follow all BPA and OSHA safety procedures during construction.

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 would coordinate project activities with landowners and land managers at proposed work locations and would continue to coordinate during construction and site restoration. BPA communicated project scope and schedule with Washington Department of Natural Resources during the planning and permitting process. BPA would continue to coordinate with Washington Department of Natural Resources during construction, as necessary.

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

Signed: /s/ *Kylie Porter*
Kylie Porter
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: *July 10, 2025*