

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Olympia-Grand Coulee Phase IV Miles 47 to 70 Access Road Improvement Project

Project No.: P06653

Project Manager: Donna Martin, TELF-TPP-3

Location: King and Pierce counties, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance, B1.24 Property Transfers

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to conduct access road improvements along the Olympia-Grand Coulee No. 1 transmission line from miles 47 to 70. All work would be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA standards.

To support future operations and maintenance of the transmission line, approximately 22 miles of existing access roads would be reconstructed or improved. Work would also include installation or replacement of 21 cross-drain culverts, improvement and installation of drain dips and ditches, as well as repairing an abutment foundation and armoring on an existing bridge to its original specifications. Additionally, the proposed work would include the construction or repair of 14 leveled rocky transmission structure landing pads and a single vehicle pullout. The landing pads and vehicle pull out would range in size from 30 feet by 40 feet to 60 feet by 100 feet and would total approximately 1 acre. Three gates would also be installed. The road and landing work would include blading, shaping, grading, brushing, and placing surface rock.

General equipment used for the proposed project work includes graders, rollers, bull-dozer, brush hogs, excavators, and dump trucks.

As part of the project, land easements would also be secured for several roads where BPA determined land rights are required for future use to access the right-of-way and to conduct current and future maintenance.

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

Laura Roberts
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

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: Olympia-Grand Coulee Phase IV Miles 47 to 70 Access Road Improvement Project

Project Site Description

The proposed project is located in western Washington and consists of a mixture of forest lands managed for timber, agricultural lands, and rural residential. Surface waters in the general vicinity of the proposed project include several rivers, perennial and intermittent streams, and wetlands. Project location and land ownership listed below.

Township	Range	Section	County	Ownership
19N	6E	13,14,20-23,29,31,32	Pierce	Private
19N	7E	3,4,8,9,17,18,34-36	King, Pierce	Private and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
20N	8E	12-15,21,22,28-31	King	Private and WA Dept. of Natural Resources
20N	9E	7-9,16,17	King	Private and Green River Municipal Watershed

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation on September 15, 2020 with the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, the Nisqually Indian Tribe, the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe, the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Seattle District, and the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). A response was received from the Washington State DAHP on the same date concurring with the delineated Area of Potential Effect (APE). Cultural resources surveys were completed in 2020-2022. As a result, historic properties present within the APE include: four BPA transmission lines and a cabin (DAHP Property ID: 727123). The proposed work is considered normal maintenance that would have no adverse effect to BPA's historic transmission lines. The cabin would be avoided by the project. BPA sent consultation letters summarizing BPA's finding of no adverse effect to historic properties on July 27, 2021, and again on March 19, 2022, confirming the finding based on a supplemental survey report. DAHP concurred with the finding in letters dated August 18, 2021, for the original report, and March 30, 2022, for the supplemental report. The Snoqualmie Tribe responded in an email dated March 21, 2022, stating they had no comments. No other responses were received.

Notes:

- Construction crews would be required to avoid the cabin (DAHP Property ID: 727123) and its structure would be marked with fencing, rope, and signage and avoidance requirements would be included in construction specification documents.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor impacts, such as movement and compaction, to geology and soils would occur from access road and structure landing work. Appropriate Best Management Practices (BMP) would be implemented prior to initiating

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status plant species or habitats occur within the project area. Impacts to plants would be minor and would consist of approximately 1 acre of permanent vegetation loss from construction or repair of 14 leveled rocked transmission structure landing pads and repair of a single vehicle pullout. Appropriate BMPs would be implemented prior to initiating ground disturbing activities and all unrocked disturbed areas would be stabilized and seeded upon project completion.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status wildlife species or habitats occur in the project area. The project would have temporary noise and disturbance impacts to local wildlife species related to construction equipment noise and human presence. Impacts would be temporary and there is suitable adjacent habitat to access during disturbance.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area crosses several rivers and perennial and intermittent streams. Federal/state special-status fish species and designated critical habitat do occur within the project area. However, no project work would occur in water bodies where federal/state special-status fish species or habitats occur. Cross-drain culvert installation and improvement and installation of drain dips and ditches would not result in impacts to waterbodies as their locations do not have connections to surface waters. Upstream of an existing bridge, beaver activity resulted in water undercutting the bridge's abutment foundation and armoring. Repairing the bridge's abutment foundation and armoring to its original specifications may result in a minor temporary localized increase in turbidity from placement of riprap below the ordinary high-water mark. Under Section 404(f)(1) of the Clean Water Act (CWA), this bridge repair work is exempt from permit requirements for the discharge of fill material into waters of the United States as it is maintenance of a currently serviceable transportation structure [Activities not requiring permits, 40 C.F.R. § 232.3(2)]. Project activities would not impact the water quality of the Green River Municipal Watershed. All appropriate BMPs would be utilized to minimize potential impacts from bridge abutment armoring repair.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Wetlands do occur within the project area. No wetlands occur in landing or pull out work areas. At a few locations where roads were initially constructed in wetlands, a small amount of fill or discharges to wetlands could occur inside or adjacent to existing roads when reestablishing road prisms to their original specifications. Under Section 404(f)(1) of the CWA, this work is exempt from permit requirements for the discharge of fill material into waters of the United States as it is maintenance of currently serviceable transportation structures [Activities not requiring permits, 40 C.F.R. § 232.3(2)]. All appropriate BMPs would be utilized to minimize potential impacts to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to groundwater or aquifers are anticipated as the proposed project ground disturbance would not be deep enough to penetrate groundwater.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change in land use or specially-designated areas as a result of the project. Easement acquisition would not change the underlying access road use.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Road upgrades and structure landing pads would have minimal impacts to visual quality as they would be consistent with the existing transmission line right-of-way.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small amount of vehicle emissions would occur during project implementation. However, there would be no substantial changes to air quality during or after the implementation of the proposed action.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours from the proposed project. No ongoing noise increase is expected as a result of this project.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During project implementation, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Therefore, implementation of the proposed action would not impact human health or 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: BPA Realty is in coordination with private landowners and land management agencies.

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

Signed:

Laura Roberts
Environmental Protection Specialist