

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Transmission Line Structure Hardware and Equipment Maintenance, Replacement, and Installation through 2030

Project Manager: Multiple

Location: Multiple locations in Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Montana, California, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance; B4.6 Additions and Modifications to Transmission Facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to maintain, replace, or install hardware and equipment on its lattice-steel, tubular-steel, and wood pole electrical transmission structures throughout the BPA service territory.

BPA would maintain, replace, or install hardware and equipment along transmission line structures, including but not limited to; cross-arm brackets, insulators, connectors, bracing, jumpers, peaks and associated overhead protected ground wire hardware, and fall protection cable safety systems. Installation would require a line truck and approximately two-to-four workers in the tower and one-to-two workers on the ground. Temporary cribbing may be utilized to level and stabilize line truck out-riggers.

These actions would occur on existing towers of transmission lines that cross both BPA fee-owned land and land where BPA possesses an agreed upon easement with the landowner. The towers would be accessed using BPA's existing access road system and the proposed work would not require ground disturbing activities.

Each project would be reviewed by the BPA NEPA lead to ensure that the activities fall within the range of those described in this Categorical Exclusion prior to initiating work.

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

Jeremy Doschka
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: Transmission Line Structure Hardware and Equipment Maintenance, Replacement, and Installation through 2030

Project Site Description

Existing transmission towers located in BPA's service territory, including Idaho, Oregon, Washington, western Montana and small parts of eastern Montana, California, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA Cultural Resources staff has determined that the proposed undertaking, with the understanding no ground disturbance is required and work is confined to the BPA transmission structure, meets Stipulation I.A.1 of *Programmatic Agreement Among the Bonneville Power Administration, the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, the Washington State Historic Preservation Office, the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to Address Effects to BPA Transmission Lines* (executed December 19, 2024). No further Section 106 consultation is required.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities would not require ground disturbing activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities may cause minor crushing of existing vegetation surrounding transmission line structures. The activities would not impact any Federal or state special-status species or habitats. There would be no effect to ESA-listed species in the area. The proposed activities would not require plant removal. In locations on BPA access roads or surrounding transmission line structures where ESA-listed plant species (e.g. Kincaid's lupine) are known to occur, established measures or timing restrictions would be implemented, as appropriate, so that activities would have no effect on ESA-listed plant species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities would not require habitat removal or disturbance. Minor, intermittent noise associated with project activities has the potential for temporary disturbance to nearby wildlife species. In those locations containing nesting sensitive Federal or state bird species (e.g. bald and golden eagles), timing restrictions would be employed to minimize nest disturbance.

There would be no effect to ESA-listed species in the area. In locations along BPA access roads or surrounding transmission line structures where ESA-listed wildlife species are known to occur, established measures or timing restrictions would be implemented, as appropriate, so that activities would have no effect on ESA-listed wildlife species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities would not require in-water work or ground disturbance that would produce sediment that could enter nearby waterways.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities would not require ground disturbance that would produce sediment that could enter nearby wetlands. In locations along BPA access roads or surrounding transmission line structures where wetlands occur, appropriate Clean Water Act permitting and authorizations would be obtained prior to implementation.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Spill prevention measures would be utilized during project activities. No groundwater or aquifers would be impacted by the activities.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use would occur and activities would not impact land use.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The activities would have minimal impacts to visual quality and the results would remain consistent with the existing surroundings of the transmission line corridor.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The activities would generate a small amount of vehicle emissions and dust during construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours. The operational noise of the transmission lines would not change.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Workers would follow all standard safety protocols. Activities 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: All activities would be coordinated with landowners prior to beginning work.

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

Signed:

Jeremy Doschka
Environmental Protection Specialist