

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Urgent Response on Hatton Tap Disconnect Switch Replacement.

Project No.: 06891

Project Manager: James Barnhart, TEPL-TPP-1

Location: Franklin, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine maintenance, B1.13 Pathways, short access roads, and rail lines, B1.27 Disconnection of utilities, B1.31 Installation or relocation of machinery, and B4.13 Upgrading and rebuilding existing powerlines and equipment

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes replacing a tap line switch on the Connell Tap to Benton-Scootenev No 1 and installing a new wood pole structure and lattice switch support structure near the Hatton Tap. This work is due to the switch failing.

BPA would remove the switch from its current location at structure 5/5 and leave the wooden poles in place with no fill. A new wood pole structure and lattice switch support would be constructed approximately 275 feet southeast of structure 5/5. Equipment to be used would include work trucks, backhoe, and water trucks. Ground disturbances would be minimal and localized to the project area. Right of entry for access roads has been granted, and BPA would repair any damage to access roads incurred during the duration of the project. BPA proposes to conduct this work in the summer of 2025 through the fall of 2026. BPA would replace the structures in late September 2025 and would have two 8-hour outages.

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 1021.410(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

/s/ Wyatt Barrs

Wyatt Barrs

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: July 31, 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 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.

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: Urgent Response on Hatton Tap Disconnect Switch Replacement.

Project Site Description

The project site is on the Hatton Tap (a.k.a. Connell Tap to Benton-Scooteney No 1) at the 5/5 structure located on private land in Franklin County, Washington, and about 275 feet southeast of the 5/5 structure where the new poles and switch would be installed. At the 5/5 location, wetland hydrology was confirmed to be present. The planned location to the southwest of the 5/5 structure does not have any notable or restrictive characteristics. The project area has no protected species/plants and is predominantly used for agricultural activities.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA has determined that the Connell Tap to Benton-Scooteney No. 1 Transmission Line is eligible for listing in the NRHP per the BPA Pacific Northwest Transmission System Multiple Property Document (BPA MPD). However, BPA finds that the proposed project would not adversely affect the eligible transmission lines. Based on a completed Section 106 determination, and pursuant to Stipulation II.B.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA will require that work be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA and in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Soils in the switch removal work area are a part of the wetland in the area and have a sandy/silty texture that is saturated. These soils would not be disturbed by more than 1/10th of an acre. The new structures about 275 feet to the southeast of the switch removal area would result in upland soil excavation within an area of about 25 feet by 100 feet. Due to dry seasonal conditions, a water truck would be used to help prevent any damage to the access roads being used during the project. No bedrock geology is expected to be encountered during project activities. The terrain is flat, and erosion and sedimentation risk is expected to be low.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Vegetation would be crushed at the disconnect removal location and from excavation for structure installation. The work area currently has agricultural vegetation and would be replanted after project completion. No federal/state special-status plant species or habitats are present within the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is in the geographic distribution of the Yellow-Billed Cuckoo bird, Monarch Butterfly, and Suckley's Cuckoo Bumblebee, however, there are no known reported sightings of any of the individual species in the area, and there is no critical habitat within the area for any of the species either. Non-listed species in the project area would be subject to temporary noise disturbance and are expected to retreat further into nearby areas of the habitat away from construction activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No water bodies, floodplains, or fish are present within the project area.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation Wetland indicators are present at the 5/5 structure where the disconnect switch would be removed. However, work being done at the location would not contribute to more than 1/10th of an acre of ground disturbance, as the wood poles currently in place would not be removed.

Section 404 of the Clean Water Act regulates dredge and fill activity in wetlands. Due to the limited scope and footprint of the project, the proposed action would be permitted under a non-notifying Nationwide Permit No. 57, which covers Electric Utility Line and Telecommunications Activities with limited impacts to wetlands and waterways

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

8. Explanation: Work would not lead to any excavation or ground disturbance deep enough to impact or encounter any groundwater resources or aquifers. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action is consistent with current right-of-way land use and would not cause disruption to the surrounding agricultural uses. The project site is not located in a specially designated area. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact land use or specially designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Visual changes caused by the work would be minimal. The wood poles at the 5/5 location would remain while the switch is removed. The new wood pole support structure and lattice switch support structure would be visually consistent with the other transmission structures on the line.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Construction activities have the potential to result in minor and temporary increases in dust and emissions in the local area. Standard erosion and sediment controls would be implemented, as needed. There would be no change to air quality from existing conditions once construction is complete

Notes:

- A water truck would be in use to reduce dust and erosion along the access roads within the project area.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project site is in a rural area surrounded by agricultural lands and other electric transmission lines and equipment. The project activities would be consistent with transmission line structure, hardware and equipment maintenance. During construction, use of vehicles and equipment, and other general construction activities, could temporarily and intermittently produce noise at levels higher than current conditions. There would be no change in ambient noise from existing conditions once construction is complete.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All standard safety protocols would be followed throughout project construction, and standard construction BMPs would minimize risk to human, health, and safety. Therefore, the proposed action would not be expected to impact 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:

The new pole and disconnect switch are located in BPA's ROW. Access to work areas for the new pole and existing would utilize legal access roads outside the ROW, existing roads within the ROW, and existing two-track roads outside the ROW where BPA has a right of entry. Coordination with underlying landowners has already taken place for access and project work.

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

Signed: /s/ Wyatt Barrs

Date: July 31, 2025

Wyatt Barrs

Physical Scientist (Environmental)