

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: TCT Columbia Holdings LLC Road Improvement Project

Project No.: LURR20250015

Project Manager: Brent Leslie, TERR-THE DALLES

Location: Klickitat County, Washington.

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way; B1.3 Routine Maintenance,

Description of the Proposed Action: The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow TCT Columbia Holdings LLC to use and improve existing BPA access roads and construct a spur road on BPA-fee-owned land in Klickitat County, Washington. TCT Columbia Holdings LLC proposes to use and improve existing BPA access roads which would include replacing the gate and rocking a 100-foot-long section near the main road (Snowden Road) and grading the entire length of the proposed route (approximately 1,500 feet). Additionally, a spur road to access TCT Columbia Holdings LLC land to the south of the project area would be constructed using dirt and would be 15 feet long and 12 feet wide. There are spans of two separate BPA transmission lines in the right-of-way (ROW): Knight-Ostrander No. 1 and North Bonneville-Midway No. 1. All associated project activities would occur beneath the transmission lines and would not alter or impact the line in any way.

BPA authorizes the use of and manages its fee-owned lands pursuant to its authority under sections 2(e) and 2(f) of the Bonneville Project Act. 16 U.S.C. § 832a(e)-(f).

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

Jessica A. Heppler
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 Evaluation

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.

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Project Site Description

The proposed project site is located in a BPA ROW, in Klickitat County, Washington (T3N R11E Section 3). Project activities would be carried out within BPA fee-owned ROW between Snowden Road and structures 32/6 and 29/1 on North Bonneville-Midway No.1. and Knight-Ostrander No. 1 transmission lines, respectively. Surface cover within the project site is typically managed for low growing grasses and shrubs and maintained gravel road surfaces. The area outside the ROW may be characterized as sparse rural residential, agricultural land use, and public and privately owned timberlands. The National Hydrography Dataset indicates the nearest body of water is a creek approximately 1000 feet to the east of the project area, and soil data from the Natural Resources Conservation Service indicates the soils at the project site are composed of primarily of non-hydric McGowan ashy loam.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: The BPA archaeologist determined that no historic properties would be affected by the project. Consulting parties that were sent consultation and determination letters on June 10th, 2025 included the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, the Nez Perce Tribe, and the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation. On June 10, 2025 the SHPO concurred with BPA's delineation of the Area of Potential Effects (APE) and assigned 2025-05-03523 to the consultation. On July 8, 2025 – The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) concurred with determination. No other responses were received.

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: The proposed activities would involve some temporary soil disturbance from the rocking, grading, and construction of a short spur-road, as well as the replacement of the Snowden Road gate. The rocking and grading of the current road features would reduce future erosion and would be contained within the previously established road prism. Project activities are not anticipated to affect geology.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Work would occur in areas maintained as an open transmission line rights-of-way corridor. Some common native and non-native plants would be removed where the construction of the 15-foot-long spur road is anticipated to be built. No special-status plants or Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed plants would be impacted from project activities. No ESA-listed plant species are present in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: There are no documented occurrences of any Federal or state special-status wildlife species near the project site. Minor, intermittent noise associated with project activities has the potential for temporary disturbance to nearby wildlife species. There are no long-term disturbance effects anticipated.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: There are no water bodies, floodplains or fish habitat at or near the project location; therefore, there would be no impact to these resources.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: The project action area is not within or near a wetland.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Project activities are unlikely to reach depths where groundwater, or aquifers could be affected.

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 this project.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Maintaining and upgrading the existing road and adding a 15-foot-long spur road in the BPA ROW is expected to be a minor alteration to visual quality and would remain consistent with the overall visual characteristics of the site.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Depending on the vehicles and equipment used, temporary and minor dust and vehicle emissions could increase in the local area during project implementation. There would be no long-term impact to air quality following completion of the project.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No.

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

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Project actions would not generate or use hazardous materials and would not create conditions that would increase risk to human health and safety. No impact to human health and safety is expected as a result of project activities.

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 project site is on BPA fee-owned land and would not require any additional landowner notifications, involvement or coordination.

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

Signed:

Jessica A. Heppler
Environmental Protection Specialist