

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Douglas County PUD Line Upgrade at Valhalla Substation

Project No.: N0827 and LURR 20230328

Project Manager: Viet Le, TPCF-MEAD-GOB

Location: Chelan County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to allow the Public Utility District (PUD) No. 1 of Douglas County (Douglas County PUD) to reconnector their Valhalla-Rapids No. 1 115 kV line on existing transmission structures on BPA fee-owned land and within the Valhalla Substation. The proposed reconductoring work would require Douglas County PUD to obtain a land use agreement.

Reconductoring activities on BPA fee-owned land would include the following work:

- Douglas County would establish an approximately 100-foot-wide by 450-foot-long staging area for reconductoring activities outside of the Valhalla Substation. This area would be used to set up a pulling station as well as staging equipment and vehicles for the reconductoring work. Additionally, Douglas County PUD would set up a pulling station inside of the Valhalla substation for the reconductoring work.
- BPA would remove the existing Valhalla-Rapids No. 1 115 kV line conductors attached to BPA's Valhalla Substation Bay B-274 dead-end structure and hand the old conductor over the Valhalla Substation fence to the Douglas County PUD line crew.
- Douglas County PUD would hand over new conductor over the substation fence to BPA's line crew and BPA would attach the new Valhalla-Rapids No 1 115 kV line conductors to BPA's Valhalla Substation Bay B-274 dead-end structure.

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

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 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.

Proposed Action: Douglas County PUD Line Upgrade at Valhalla Substation

Project Site Description

The project site is located within the Valhalla Substation and on the Douglas County PUD Valhalla-Rapids No. 1 115 kV transmission line outside the Valhalla Substation on BPA fee-owned right-of-way (ROW). The project site is in the Columbia River flood plain approximately 0.5 mile from the river. The project site consists of grasses, weeds, and scattered sage brush. There are no wetlands or other water bodies in the project site. Elevations in the project site range from 750 to 780 feet. The Alcoa Wenatchee Works Facility is located between the Valhalla Substation and the Columbia River and the Malaga Alcoa Highway borders the project site to the southwest. The surrounding area consists of developed and undeveloped areas. Steep slopes with areas of broken basalt outcrops occur southwest of the substation with elevations reaching 2,405 feet at the top. Orchards are located 0.3 mile northwest of the project site and west of the Alcoa Wenatchee Works facility.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation on October 31, 2024 with the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). DAHP concurred with BPA's area of potential effects (APE) on November 5, 2024.

Background research indicated that the Valhalla Substation Control House (Property ID: 716775) has been previously determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) with DAHP concurrence. The proposed project would not alter any character-defining features of the Valhalla Substation Control House and would result in no adverse effect to the Valhalla Substation and Control House.

An archaeological field survey was completed in 2024 and resulted in the identification of one historic property in the APE. No new impacts to this property would occur from the proposed work. On June 25, 2025, BPA sent the report and a determination letter of no adverse effect to the consulting parties (BPA CR Project No.: WA 2023 130; DAHP Log No.: 2024-11-08035-BPA). DAHP concurred with the determination on June 25, 2025 based on the stipulations listed below. The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation also responded in agreement with the determination on June 25, 2025. No other responses were received.

Notes:

- Avoid the identified site.
- Have an archaeological monitor onsite during work.
- In the unlikely event that cultural resources or historic properties are inadvertently encountered during the implementation of the project, halt work 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: Localized ground disturbance would occur from equipment used for pulling stations and vehicles during reconductoring activities. No ground excavation would occur.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action could crush native and non-native grasses, or small shrubs outside of the Valhalla Substation from equipment and vehicles during reconductoring activities. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status plant species near the project site, and no suitable special-status species habitat is present.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary disturbance of normal wildlife behavior and wildlife displacement could occur from elevated noise and human presence during reconductoring activities. However, there would be no permanent impacts to wildlife habitat, and temporarily disturbed or displaced wildlife would likely reoccupy the site following completion of the proposed action. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status wildlife species near the project site, and no suitable special-status species habitat is present.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project site does not contain any water bodies or surface connectivity to fish-bearing streams. The project site is located within the Columbia River floodplain; however, the Columbia River is approximately 0.5 miles away and the Alcoa Wenatchee Works facility is located between the Valhalla Substation and the river. Typical erosion control BMPs would be implemented, and no riparian habitat would be affected. There would be no effect on ESA-listed or sensitive fish species.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present within or near the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to groundwater or aquifers are anticipated. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project proposes to reductor an existing power line outside of the Valhalla Substation, which is consistent with the existing land uses. The project site is not located in a specially-designated area.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would be reconductoring an existing power line, which would not change the visual quality of the area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would cause a minor and temporary increase in dust and vehicle emissions in the local area during reconductoring activities. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the proposed action.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Reconductoring activities would result in a temporary increase in noise during daylight hours.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed uses 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: All proposed work would occur on BPA fee-owned property. No landowner notification, involvement, or coordination would be required.

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