

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: FY22-FY24 Idaho Falls Priority Poles Replacement Project, Macks Inn-Maddison 10/6

Transmission project bundle number: P05054

PP&A No.: 6767

Project Manager: Jodie Anderson, TEPL-TPP-1

Location: Fremont County, Idaho

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

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to replace in-kind, wood pole structure 10/6 and associated structural/electrical components (e.g., cross arms, insulators, guy anchors, ect.) of the Mack's Inn-Maddison transmission line in the Idaho Falls TLM District.

After the current pole structure is removed, replacement poles would be placed within approximately 5 feet ahead or back online from the existing structure. Where needed, the project also includes improvements to existing access roads and the landing associated with the transmission line right-of-way that currently may inhibit access to the structure location for routine maintenance. Access road maintenance may include surface improvements of existing access roads and landing (blading and rocking) as well as improvements and in-kind replacements of existing drainage features. One approximately 50-foot by 50-foot landing would be constructed at the structure location.

The proposed project would allow safe and timely access to the transmission line which would reduce outage times and maintain reliable power in the region. 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), 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.

/s/ Greg Tippetts

Greg Tippetts

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: September 5, 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: FY22-FY24 Idaho Falls Priority Poles Replacement Project, Macks Inn-Maddison 10/6.

Project Site Description

The structure replacement would be located in Fremont County Idaho, in BPA's Idaho Falls Maintenance District. All work would be done in existing managed rights-of-way that is surrounded by forested land. The project is located on US Forest Service (USFS)-managed land in the Targhee National Forest. The project area is located near Idaho State highway 1, a main roadway providing access to Island Park and West Yellowstone. This is a very popular area for recreation and the forest has substantial use by campers, hunters, off-road vehicles, and other human activity. Site-specific locations and details are listed in table 1.

Table 1. Structure replacements in the Idaho Falls District.

Transmission Line	Structure	TRS	County/State	Land Management
Mack's Inn-Maddison No. 1	10/6	MT T14S R4E SEC36	Fremont, ID	USFS, Targhee National Forest

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation:

Bonneville is proposing this project consistent with the emergency procedure described at 36 CFR § 800.12(b)(2) of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and the emergency declared by the President in Executive Order 14156 "Declaring a National Energy Emergency." BPA notified the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP); the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO); the Shoshone-Paiute Tribes of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation; and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes on March 20 and requested a response by March 31, 2025, in compliance with 36 CFR 800.12. BPA noted that no previously identified cultural resources are located within the area of potential effects of any of the project locations and that a cultural resources survey would be conducted after the structure was replaced to identify any cultural resources that may be present. BPA staff also used proprietary oblique imagery to examine the structure location for any obvious cultural resources that may be present and none were identified. Based on BPA's review, the likelihood of encountering a cultural resources site would be low. The SHPO responded on March 20, 2025, to request that the information be uploaded electronically. On March 26, 2025, the ACHP responded to note the measures BPA had taken to identify cultural resources and remind BPA that the SHPO and Tribes would also need to be notified. No additional 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. The BPA environmental lead, archaeologist, and project manager would be immediately notified. Reasonable measures would be taken to protect the discovery site, including any appropriate stabilization or covering.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All wood pole replacements would be in-kind and would be placed near the locations of the existing poles. Localized soil disturbance would occur during wood pole replacements, landing improvements, and access road maintenance activities. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized as necessary.

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

Potential for Significance: No, may affect but not likely to adversely affect.

Explanation: While no ESA-listed plant species are present in the project location, there may be potential suitable habitat, so BPA consulted with US Fish and Wildlife and determined the project may affect but is not likely to adversely affect listed plant species. This is documented in a letter of concurrence (FWS/R1/2024-0051740) dated April 19, 2024. No federal special-status, state listed, or USFS sensitive plants are present in the project areas.

Project activities would be limited to the already impacted right-of-way and access roads and would not substantially alter existing plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No, may affect but not likely to adversely affect.

Explanation: The project location is not within or near any designated critical habitats or known occupied sites for listed species. The project would have a small impact on wildlife related to temporary disturbance associated with elevated equipment noise and human presence. Work would occur in areas maintained as an open transmission line corridor with herbaceous wildlife habitat. During project activities, work with heavy equipment may cause temporary disturbance to wildlife causing avoidance of the area. The disturbance would be of a short duration and would not affect any species' long-term activities. Grizzly Bear, and wolves could potentially be within the project area. However, this is not likely due to high presence of human activity in the project area. BPA consulted with US Fish and Wildlife and determined the project may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect Grizzly Bear, and wolves. This is documented in a letter of concurrence (FWS/R1/2024-0051740) dated April 19, 2024.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No in-water work or ground disturbance near waterways or any ESA-listed fish streams is planned. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized to stabilize the project sites during and after the maintenance activities to prevent sediment from entering any nearby waterbodies.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are documented within the project area. Additionally, no documented wetlands are within the influence of the project sites.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities are not expected to impact groundwater or aquifers. The maximum depth of disturbance would be about 12 feet below ground surface.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project location is confined to the existing transmission line right-of-way corridor and off right-of-way access roads with legal rights. Surrounding land uses is USFS, Targhee National Forest. No recreational areas would be impacted. Project work locations would be localized to the existing wood pole transmission structure and would not significantly impact the underlying property. Project locations do not include any specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed actions at existing facilities would not alter or affect visual quality. Structure replacement would be in-kind and access road improvement work would occur on existing roads. The project would not result in a noticeable visual change from the existing structures and access roads.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project work would be of a short duration and involves normal construction equipment activities. A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions is expected due to construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would be located away from any populated areas. Noise disturbance would be limited to general construction equipment activities, would be for a short duration, and would occur during daylight hours.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is considered normal construction and maintenance. The proposed work is necessary to ensure ongoing safe and reliable operation of the transmission line and to maintain power delivery in the region.

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 notified and coordinated with the USFS, Targhee National Forest in advance of the construction of the proposed project. The BPA realty specialist has been in contact with the USFS and they were given advance notice of the project.

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

Signed: /s/ Greg Tippetts Date: September 5, 2025
Greg Tippetts
Physical Scientist (Environmental)