

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: FY24 Pasco District Priority Pole Replacements

Project No.: 6911

Project Manager: Raymond Cheng, TEPL-TPP-1

Location: Adams, Benton, Franklin, and Walla Walla Counties, Washington and Umatilla County, Oregon

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

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to replace deteriorating wood pole structures and associated structural/electrical components (e.g. cross arms, insulators, guy anchors, etc.) on fourteen different transmission lines in the Pasco district.

See table below for structure names and locations on the transmission lines.

Transmission Line/ROW	Structure #	Township	Range	Section	County, State
WHITE BLUFFS - RICHLAND #1	1/9	10N	28E	7	Benton, WA
SCHRAG TAP TO RUFF- WARDEN	10/11	19N	32E	19	Adams, WA
RED MOUNTAIN-RICHLAND NO 1	4/12	9N	28E	17	Benton, WA
RADAR TAP (USBR) TO SCOOTENEY TAP	0/5	14N	29E	23	Franklin, WA
MCNARY-FRANKLIN NO 2	1/3	5N	28E	16	Umatilla, OR
HEDGES TAP TO FRANKLIN- BADGER CANYON NO 2	1/3, 1/4	8N	30E	9	Benton, WA
HATTON TAP TO CONNELL TAP	6/1, 6/2, 6/3	14N	31E	9	Franklin, WA
HAT ROCK TAP TO MCNARY- WALLULA	1/1	5N	30E	18	Umatilla, OR
BENTON-FRANKLIN NO 1	17/4	9N	30E	9	Franklin, WA
BADGER CANYON-RICHLAND NO 1	5/5	9N	28E	22	Benton, WA
FRANKLIN-HEDGES NO 1	4/6, 5/7	8N 8N	30E 30E	9 15	Benton, WA

FRANKLIN-BADGER CANYON NO 2	5/5, 5/6, 6/11, 11/5	8N 8N 8N	30E 30E 29E	9 7 9	Benton, WA
WALLA WALLA-PENDLETON NO 1	15/1, 34/3, 34/4, 34/5, 34/6, 34/7, 35/2, 35/4, 37/8, 40/3	6N 3N 3N 3N 3N 3N 3N 3N 3N 2N	34E 33E 33E 33E 33E 33E 33E 33E 33E 32E	34 22 22 22 22 22 22 21 31 1	Umatilla, OR
FRANKLIN-WALLA WALLA NO 1	27/1, 33/2, 33/5, 33/8, 34/3, 36/6	7N 7N 7N 7N 7N 7N	34E 35E 35E 35E 35E 35E	18 18 18 18 17 22	Walla Walla, WA

The structures would be replaced in kind, which would ideally be done by pulling the existing structure out of the ground, auguring the existing hole and placing a new pole in the ground. In some instances, a backhoe would be necessary to excavate a larger hole for a pole to avoid sediment collapse. On occasion, new holes would be excavated, typically within five feet of the existing hole.

BPA proposes to repair or improve approximately 3.3 miles (about 17,400 linear feet) of access road in the 34 mile to 38 mile along the Walla Walla-Pendleton No. 1 transmission line. Proposed road work would include blading, shaping, grading, brushing, mowing, and placing surface rock on existing road prisms to ensure safe access to structures. In addition, the proposed work would include the construction of nineteen, 40 feet by 60 feet, transmission tower landings and installation of nine drain dips. General equipment used for this type of road maintenance includes: graders, rollers, bulldozers, brush hogs, excavators, and dump trucks.

The proposed action would allow safe and timely access to the transmission line, which would help reduce outage times and maintain reliable power in the region. All work would be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA standards. 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

/s/ Shawn L. Barndt

Shawn L. Barndt

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: September 17, 2025

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

cc: (w/ enclosures)

T. Cossairt – TFPF-TRI CITIES RMHQ

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: FY24 Pasco District Priority Pole Replacements.

Project Site Description

All but three structures being replaced are in easements on private property located within a variety of terrain and land uses primarily consisting of agricultural and undeveloped scablands with a few structures also located in urban, suburban, rural residential land uses.

The three structures located on federally-owned lands are located within scablands, agricultural fields or within an industrial area. The three structures being replaced on federal property are the following: White Bluffs-Richland #1 structure 1/9 – on the Hanford Site managed by DOE-RL, McNary-Franklin #2 structure 1/3 – BPA-fee owned industrial property, and Badger Canyon-Richland #1 structure 5/5 – recreational use property managed by BLM.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation:

BPA initiated consultation on November 25, 2024 (BPA CR Project No.: WA 2025 017; DAHP log no. 2024-11-08378). Consulting parties included the Hanford Tribal Technical Working Group (the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation [CTUIR], the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation [YN], the Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho [NPT], and the Wanapum), CTUIR, the YN, the NPT, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, the U.S. Bureau of Land Management – Spokane District, Oregon SHPO, and the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). DAHP responded on November 25, 2024, concurring with the Area of Potential Effects (APE) and assigning the project DAHP Log No. 2024-11-08378, and on November 27, 2024, from the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) assigning the project SHPO Case No. 24-1890. No other responses were received during the initial 30-day period. As a result of the survey, three Built Environment resources, and no archaeological resources, were observed in the project area of potential effects. Two of them were determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places but would not be adversely affected by the project. BPA has determined that the project would have no adverse effect on the BPA historic transmission lines. The survey report and determination of no adverse effect to historic properties was sent to consulting parties August 6, 2025. DAHP concurred with the determination on August 11, 2025. No other responses were received during the 30-day period.

Notes:

- In the event that archaeological or historic materials are discovered during project activities, work in the immediate vicinity must stop, the area would be secured, and OR SHPO/DAHP and the environmental project lead must be notified.
- Crews and equipment are to use existing access roads to and from each work site.
- Limit access road maintenance to the existing road prism.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Localized soil disturbance would occur during wood pole replacement and access road improvements. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized as necessary.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minimal disturbance to vegetation is anticipated. There would be no effect to ESA-listed plant species. No impacts to state or federally sensitive species are anticipated. Project activities would be limited to the already impacted access road and transmission line right-of-way and would not substantially alter existing plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In general, the project would have a small impact to wildlife and habitat related to temporary disturbance associated with elevated equipment noise and human presence. The project would have no impacts to state or federally listed sensitive species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project areas are not located within a floodplain and there are no nearby water bodies that support resident, anadromous, or ESA-listed fish. Erosion control best management practices combined with the distance to the nearest waterbody would ensure that sedimentation would not enter into any water body.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are within the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No use of groundwater proposed. Maximum depth of disturbance would be about 12 feet below ground surface.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use in the long term. Work would not interrupt current land uses within and near the work area which are current transmission line rights-of-way and access roads. Work near the BLM-managed recreational area would occur near the edge of the use area and BPA has coordinated with BLM to avoid and minimize recreational disturbance. .

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be performed within existing transmission line right-of-way and access road prisms. Replacement of the wood pole and associated components would be in kind and replaced in the same location.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have a temporary impact on air quality from a small amount of vehicle emissions and dust generated during construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be temporary construction noise. Operational noise of the transmission line would not change.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would allow safe and timely access to the transmission line which would help reduce outage times and maintain reliable power in the region. Appropriate measures, which could include spotters or fencing, to prevent the public and landowners from accessing construction work areas would be implemented.

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 personnel, environmental specialist and archaeologist have coordinated the proposed project activities with the landowners and managers prior to project initiation and any concerns regarding proposed transmission line maintenance activities have been addressed.

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

Signed: /s/ Shawn Barndt Date: September 17, 2025
Shawn L. Barndt
Tri Cities RMHQ