

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Tunk Radio Station Access Road Improvements

**Project Manager:** Carla Clay, TEPF-CSB-2

**Location:** Okanogan County, Washington

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

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to improve an access road that leads to its Tunk Radio Site. BPA proposes to install three new cross-drain culverts and one new drain dip to improve drainage patterns across an existing access road. BPA also proposes to upgrade five separate sections of the access road for a total of two miles of improvements. Additionally, one vehicle pullout would be built along the road shoulder to facilitate a safe turning radius. Approximately five trees would be removed in the proposed location of the new pullout.

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.<sup>1</sup>

Beth Belanger  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment: Environmental Checklist

---

<sup>1</sup> 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: Tunk Radio Station Access Road Improvements**

### **Project Site Description**

The project location is in Okanogan County, Washington on the Okanogan National Forest. The project area is approximately fifteen miles northeast of Omak, Washington. Access road improvements are proposed in Sections 5, 6, 8, 9, Township 35 North, Range 29 East. The dominant tree species in the surrounding forest is Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). Aeneas Creek runs perpendicular to a portion of the road improvement areas. The headwaters of an unnamed perennial stream is approximately 950 feet away from one of the culvert replacement locations. One mapped wetland is approximately 850 feet from the nearest access road improvement area.

### **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

#### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On June 30, 2025, BPA initiated consultation with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CTCR) and the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). On June 30, 2025, and July 1, 2025, DAHP and the CTCR, respectively, concurred with BPA's Area of Potential Effects. A BPA archaeologist then completed a field survey of the project area and determined that no historic properties would be affected by the project. This determination was then sent to the consulting parties on August 1, 2025. DAHP concurred with this determination on August 1, 2025. The CTCR has not responded within 30 days.

#### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no significant impacts to geology and soils. Improving the access road and installing cross-drain culverts to direct stormwater across the road would prevent excessive soil erosion. Best practices would be implemented to prevent erosion of soils due to construction activities, including revegetation of bare ground after construction.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Federal or state special-status species or habitats that would be impacted by the project. The trees proposed for removal are Douglas firs and lodgepole pines (*Pinus contorta*). Minor amounts of herbaceous plants would be removed during culvert installations, but BPA would revegetate with a native seed mix.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The proposed work may cause short-term disturbance to wildlife, resulting in avoidance of the project work area. The Tunk Radio Station is located in a Lynx Analysis Unit (LAU) on National Forest Service lands. Lynx, an endangered species, are not currently known to occupy the LAU. The potential for lynx to be present or moving through the area is low. Project activities would occur for a limited duration and are unlikely to impact lynx. There would be no effect to other ESA-listed species. Some federal sensitive species may experience temporary impacts from project activities; however, the effects would be considered insignificant, and the potential impacts would not result in a negative trend toward federal listing for USFS sensitive species or loss of viability.

Notes:

- Tree removal would not occur between March 1 to August 15 to protect nesting migratory birds.

## **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 habitats in, or near, the site that would be affected by project activities. Aeneas Creek is the nearest fish bearing stream, but project activities are about 250 feet from the stream and best management practices would be implemented during construction to prevent erosion of soils and sedimentation of streams.

## **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities would not affect wetlands. One culvert installation location has wetland indicator plants growing along the side of the road, but hydric soils were not present. At this location, shovel resistance was met at approximately ten inches indicating a compacted subsurface, likely from the existing road construction.

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no impacts to groundwater or aquifers. Soil excavations would be approximately 3-feet-deep for culvert installations and would not encounter groundwater. The nearest EPA Sole Source aquifer, Spokane Valley Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer, is 85 miles southeast of the project area.

## **8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities would not change the existing land use in the project area and there would be no impacts to any specially-designated areas.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no impacts to visual quality. Project activities would occur on an existing access road and would not change the viewshed.

## **10. Air Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions may occur during construction; however, there would be no significant changes to air quality during or after the project.

## **11. Noise**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours.

## **12. Human Health and Safety**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During project activities all standard safety protocols would be followed. Project activities would not impact human health or 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: BPA has coordinated with the USFS on this project. No further landowner notification, involvement or coordination is required.

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

Signed:

Beth Belanger

Environmental Protection Specialist