

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Driveway Improvements and Solar Array on North Bonneville-Troutdale No. 1 230 kV Right-of-Way

Project No.: LURR-20250010

Project Manager: Billie Woodman, TERR-ROSS MHQA

Location: Klickitat County, Washington

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

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow a private landowner to upgrade an existing driveway, install a 12-inch-diameter culvert under the driveway, and install a solar power array on BPA fee-owned land within the North Bonneville-Troutdale No. 1 230 kV right-of-way (ROW) between structures 12/5 and 12/6.

The adjacent landowner is proposing to improve approximately 250 feet of an existing access road and driveway within the BPA ROW that is used to access the private residence south of the ROW. Improvements to the driveway include a new 12-foot-wide driveway that roughly follows the existing driveway alignment. Driveway improvements would include excavating approximately 12 inches of soil for the placement of a rock base and crushed rock surface. The improvements also include the installation of a 12-inch-diameter culvert buried to a depth of two feet under the improved driveway to provide cross drainage.

The solar power array would be located within the BPA ROW between the North Bonneville-Troutdale No. 1 and North-Bonneville-Ross No. 1 transmission lines and would not be situated directly under any of the conductors. The solar array would consist of five separate panel assemblies situated in a single east-west row encompassing an area of 635 square feet (10.5 feet wide by 60.5 feet long) approximately 150 north of the southern BPA ROW boundary. The solar panel assemblies would be mounted on a six-inch galvanized pipe with concrete footings. The footings would be buried approximately two feet deep. To access the solar panel array installation area, a 12-foot-wide by roughly 110-foot-long gravel road would be constructed between the existing access road and the solar array. The solar array would be connected to the private residence south of the ROW by burying approximately 150 feet of electrical line in a trench that would be approximately 30 inches deep and 12 inches wide just west of the solar array access road.

An approximately 1,500 square foot staging area for materials would be located within the BPA ROW between the existing access road and southern BPA ROW boundary near the southern end of the solar array access road.

Equipment anticipated to be used for construction would include a bulldozer, grader, front end loader/excavator, and dump truck.

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: Driveway Improvements and Solar Array on North Bonneville-Troutdale No. 1 230 kV Right-of-Way

Project Site Description

The project site is located on BPA fee-owned ROW between structures 12/5 and 12/6 on the North Bonneville-Troutdale No. 1 230 kV transmission line corridor line in Skamania County, Washington (Township 2 North, Range 5 East, Section 27). The gravel driveway would be improved within the existing driveway footprint and the solar array would be installed in a previously-disturbed area in the southern edge of the BPA property. The driveway consists of bare ground and the solar array area consists of scattered grasses, weeds, and shrubs. No wetlands or waterways are located within or adjacent to the project site. Outside of the project site, the surrounding area is primarily undeveloped logged forests in various stages of succession and low-density residential areas.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: On June 11, 2025, BPA sent an initiation letter (BPA CR Project No.: WA 2025 074) to the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, and the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). DAHP concurred with BPA's area of potential effects (APE) on June 11, 2025. No other responses were received.

BPA conducted background research and conducted a field survey that resulted in no cultural findings. On August 25, 2025, BPA sent a determination letter and report to the consulting parties with a determination of no historic properties affected. DAHP concurred with the determination on August 25, 2025 (DAHP Log No.: 2025-06-03633) with the stipulation for an unanticipated find plan. No other responses were received.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural resources or historic properties are inadvertently encountered during the implementation of the project, BPA would 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 action would result in soil disturbance from grading of the proposed driveway (3,000 square feet), access road to the solar array (1,320 square feet), and trench for the electrical line (150 square feet) totaling approximately 0.1 acre (4,470 square feet). Disturbance from the solar arrays would be small, localized areas and approximately two feet deep where the galvanized posts and concrete would be installed. Minor ground disturbance would also occur in the 1,500 square-foot staging area from storing equipment and materials. During construction, all appropriate best management practices would be used to implement site-specific erosion and sediment control. The proposed action would not impact geology.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no documented occurrences of any special-status plant species within or near the project site, and no suitable special-status species habitat is present. A majority of the proposed action would occur on bare ground with small areas of scattered vegetation being removed, crushed, or covered.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary wildlife disturbance could occur from construction noise during the day. Wildlife would access adjacent habitat during disturbance and would return upon completion. 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: No water bodies, floodplains, or fish-bearing streams are present within or near the project area. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies and floodplains and would have no effect on fish species or habitats.

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: Grading would not reach depths that would intersect groundwater. No new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers are proposed. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not impact current land uses and the project site is not located within a specially-designated area.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During implementation, the presence of equipment and general construction activities would cause temporary visual impacts. The new gravel driveway would alter the appearance of the property but be consistent with existing conditions. The solar panel arrays would result in a minor permanent visual change; however, they would only be visible from the adjacent property and from Labarre Road near the driveway of the property. The permanent changes from the solar panels and improved driveway would be consistent with the visual quality of the existing structures associated with the private residence.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

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

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action could temporarily and intermittently produce noise at levels greater than current ambient conditions. Noise impacts would be temporary and would only occur during daylight hours (approximately 7 AM to 7 PM). There would be no long-term change in ambient noise following completion of the project.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The proposed project would not be expected to impact human health and safety.

Notes:

- The Applicant shall notify BPA in a timely manner for any reportable releases of hazardous substances or breaches of environmental requirements and shall mitigate and abate adverse environmental impacts.
- The applicant shall not use or store any hazardous materials on BPA property (i.e., fuels, herbicides, solvents, paints, etc.).

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