

Categorical Exclusion Determination
Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Broadview – Garrison No. 2 Transmission Line Impairments 164/4 to 165/2

Project No.: P05322

Project Manager: Debbie Miller – TELC – TPP – 3

Location: Jefferson, Montana

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 remedy impairments to the Broadview – Garrison No. 2 transmission line at two locations along the line on National Forest System Land and private property. BPA owns and operates the Broadview – Garrison No. 2 high-voltage transmission line, which runs from Garrison Substation in Powell County, Montana, to Broadview Substation in Yellowstone County, Montana. The line is supported by steel lattice structures.

BPA has identified two impairments to the line that need to be remedied as soon as possible. Impairments are locations where the distance between the ground surface and the energized conductor does not meet safety and reliability standards. The impairments are located within spans in line mile and structure number 164/4-165/1 and 165/1-165/2 of the transmission line, where the conductor is currently hanging too close to two large boulders (granitic pillars).

At these locations, BPA proposes to conduct minor rock blasting to break apart the pillars, as currently the pillars cannot be tipped over. At 164/4 BPA proposes to install horizontal holes/blasting near the base causing the pinnacle to fall over with additional holes/blasting to reduce block sizes. The drilling machine is expected to consist of an air-track drill capable of drilling horizontal, or near horizontal, holes or a hand operated drill. Drilled holes would then be filled with blasting agent and then material to contain the blast (stemming material) according to the approved blasting plan. Further size reduction would be performed as needed. The reduced-size material would then be spread on-site. At 165/1 the impairment would be removed with expansive grout or boulder-busting. Further size reduction would be performed as needed. Once the pillars have been broken apart, BPA would spread the rock within suitable locations within the rights-of-way.

Depending on the type of drilling method and access, the blasting work would be expected to take approximately 1 to 1.5 days at each site for the drilling and blasting, with an additional 1-2 days for removal or repositioning the material. The number of blasts and decibels would be determined by the complete blasting plan, following the requirements of the BPA Blasting Specification and Montana licensed professional blaster.

In addition, to support this work, BPA proposes to conduct approximately 2.5 miles of access road improvements (grading, smoothing irregularities, laying down road gravels, etc.), as well as installing 11 drain dips, and one water bar.

All work would be conducted within the existing high-voltage corridor and on existing easements. Equipment generally used for this work includes an excavator, backhoe, blader, dump trucks, roller-compactor, light duty trucks, and blasting equipment.

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/ Adrienne Wojtasz

Adrienne Wojtasz
Physical Scientist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: October 21, 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 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: Broadview – Garrison No. 2 Transmission Line Impairments 164/4 to 165/2

Project Site Description

The proposed action is within the Montana Valley, Foothill Prairies and Middle Rockies ecoregions. The ecoregion is characterized by rugged mountains and intermontane valleys, with many of the same coniferous tree species present that comprise the forests west of the Cascade Mountains, including red cedar, western hemlock, and subalpine fir. The project area is located on United States Forest Service (Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest) managed-land in Jefferson County, Montana and privately-owned land.

The proposed action would occur within, and immediately adjacent to, BPA rights-of-way (ROWs) and access roads for the Broadview-Garrison No. 2 transmission line. BPA does not own the property on which the transmission lines are located but rather has easement rights to operate and maintain the transmission lines and access roads. The cleared transmission corridor is approximately 200 ft. wide. Vegetation in the corridor is periodically managed to remove tall-growing tree species and promote low-growing grasses and shrubs. The topography ranges from hilly to mountainous in those areas within the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest, typical of the Middle Rockies region. Elevation in the proposed work locations ranges around 5,400 to 5,900 ft.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project consists of correcting two impairments caused by large bedrock outcrops on the Broadview-Garrison No. 2 Transmission Line from 164/4 to 165/2. Pursuant to its responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR Part 800, BPA initiated consultation with the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes on December 9th, 2024, and received a response from the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on January 13th, 2025. One historic cabin site (24JF0689) was identified within the APE during the pedestrian survey; however, BPA recommends that the site is Not Eligible for listing on to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). No further management is necessary. BPA sent its determination to the above consulting parties on September 3rd, 2025, and received concurrence from the Montana SHPO on September 23rd, 2025. No other responses were received.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No excavation would take place. Minor and temporary soil compaction and rutting could occur from operating vehicles and heavy equipment. Temporarily disturbed soils would be stabilized as vegetation is re-established. No long-term impacts to geology and soils is anticipated. Access road improvements would be conducted in the existing access road prism.

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 impacted. No impacts to state or federally sensitive species are anticipated. Project activities would be limited to the already impacted right-of ways and would not substantially alter existing plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Local wildlife, such as small to midsized mammals and birds, could be disturbed by project activities, assuming they are present in the project area. However, disturbance would be temporary, and the surrounding landscape provides ample habitat and cover for displaced animals. The project area surrounding the blasting zone was evaluated using a 1-kilometer buffer to assess potential noise impacts associated with short-duration blasting activities. Modeling indicates that predicted blast sound levels would dissipate to approximately 75 dB at 1 km from the project area; peak noise would be immediate to the blasting location and remain localized to the blasting location. For context, 75 dB is within the “normal” range of ambient conditions expected in the area for wildlife.

Pursuant to obligations under Section 7, BPA requested a species list from the USFWS on March 4, 2025. An initial review of suitable habitat within the project area was conducted, supplemented with records from the Montana Natural Heritage Program database. ESA-listed species identified to potentially occur within the region include North American wolverine, Canada lynx, and grizzly bear. The project area is located within the lower elevation range of these species and does not contain the necessary habitat elements to support the species. Furthermore, there have been no documented observations of these species within 15 miles of the project site within the last 10 years. Given the limited duration and controlled nature of the blasting, and implementation of best management practices, BPA determined the project activities will have “No Effect” to North American wolverine, Canada lynx, or grizzly bear.

Notes:

- Construction window to be limited to between June 1st and October 15.
- To avoid disturbance to grizzly bears during the fall and denning season, construction activities would be conducted between June 1st and October 15.
- BPA personnel and contractors would be required to properly store and dispose of materials that could attract grizzly bears to the project area per USFS requirements.
- Overnight camping would not take place during the course of activities.

- BPA will report any sightings of ESA listed species to USFWS within 24 hours, or as quickly as practicable, and include date, time, location, photos, direction of travel, presence of a radio collar, and any other descriptive information that might be useful in identifying the bear.
- Construction activities would take place during daylight hours to minimize noise and disturbance during times when local species are more active; no night construction is permitted.
- BPA personnel and contractors performing activities in the rights-of-way and access roads away from their vehicles would be instructed to carry bear spray and know how to properly use it to deter attacking wildlife.
- To avoid disturbance to wolverine during the denning season construction activities would be conducted between May 16th and November 15th, in the areas of the Action Area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No in-water work is proposed for this project. There are no Federal or state special status fish, ESUs, or habitats found in the vicinity of the project area. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized to ensure sediment and other contaminants do not enter bodies of water; therefore, water bodies, floodplains, and fish would not be affected by the proposed project activities.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present in the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No excavation would extend to depths that would impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use. No specially-designated areas. USFS has indicated that the project would not hinder use of National Forest System lands.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be performed within existing transmission line rights-of-way and access roads. The project would correct two impairments caused by large bedrock outcroppings. The removal of the rocks would create a minimal change in visual quality of the area but would be consistent with the visual character of the area. Boulders would be spread on site.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some minor, local impacts to air quality would occur due to the blasting and construction activity and vehicular traffic; however, impacts would be temporary and insignificant.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area around the blasting zone was analyzed with a 1km buffer to account for noise associated with the short duration blasting activities. The blasting occurrence(s) would generate 135 dB and would reach 75 dB at 1km from the activity zone. 75dB is within the range of “normal” conditions expected in the area for wildlife and humans. The nearest residence or noise sensitive receptor is about 1km from the blast site. Blasting and construction activity would generate noise but would not exceed approximately 135dB. Blasting would be over a duration of less than 2 days; however, impacts would only occur during daylight hours in work areas located in remote areas.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have benefits to human health and safety, as the purpose of the project is to restore safety and reliability clearance standards currently affected by the line impairments. The blasting would be conducted by a qualified contractor who would implement standard blasting safety procedures.

Notes:

- Prior to the start of the project, work crews would identify and discuss the job hazards and safety concerns and follow all BPA and OSHA safety procedures during construction.

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 project activities with landowner and land managers at proposed work locations and would continue to coordinate during construction and site restoration. BPA communicated project scope and schedule with the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest during the planning process. BPA would continue to coordinate with USFS during construction, as necessary.

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

Signed: /s/ Adrienne Wojtasz
Adrienne Wojtasz
Physical Scientist