

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: St. Helens-Allston 5/7, 6/1 and road work

PP&A No.: 6944

Project Manager: Raymond Cheng, TEPL-TPP-1

Location: Columbia County, Oregon

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

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is proposing to replace two deteriorating wood pole structures, any associated hardware and guys, and electrical switches within BPA's Longview District. The two structures proposed for replacement are St. Helens-Allston #1 5/7 and 6/1. For all structures, the work would include removing the existing wood pole structures (and guy wires if present) and replacing them in the same location. Work areas would be approximately 100 feet by 100 feet at each of the structure replacement locations and at structure 5/7 and 6/1. Existing access roads would require improvements between 5/4 and 6/4, including blading, grading, placing new rock, and compacting. Four culverts, 5 waterbars and 6 drain dips would be replaced in kind. No new roads would be constructed.

The proposed action would 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/ Zoe Wellschlager

Zoe Wellschlager

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: October 23, 2025

Attachment:

Effect_Determinations_St.Helens_Allston_5.7_6.1

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: St. Helens-Allston 5/7, 6/1 and road work

Project Site Description

The project is in northwestern Oregon within the Coast Range ecoregion and the Volcanics sub-ecoregion. The project area experiences a moist and mild climate, dominated by douglas firs underlay with basaltic rock. The land is privately owned, with sections that have been clear-cut and replanted for timber production. The transmission line corridor is approximately 100 feet in width in the project area. Common plant species within the right-of-way includes sword ferns and grasses with big leaf maples present on the forest edges. The right-of-way is periodically managed to remove tall growing vegetation and promote low-growing species.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Pursuant to its responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR 800, BPA initiated consultation with the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and determined the proposed undertaking would result in no adverse effects to historic properties on August 28th, 2025. SHPO concurred with the APE and the determination of no adverse effect on September 26th, 2025. No other responses were received within 30 days from the other consulting parties.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA Inadvertent Discovery Protocol document should be followed, which 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: Localized soil disturbance would occur during wood pole replacement and roadwork. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized as necessary to minimize soils from traveling outside of the work areas.

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: Construction on the project would likely disturb wildlife in the area due to the presence of humans and additional noise. However, disturbance would be temporary and limited to the already impacted right-of-way and access roads and would not substantially alter the long-term footprint or operational noise of the line; therefore, wildlife and associated habitat would not be affected in the long term.

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 planned in or near ESA-listed fish streams. Four culverts would be installed in un-named ephemeral streams. The work would qualify under the non-notifying nationwide permit 57 for section 404 of the CWA as less than 1/10th of an acre would be affected by the culvert within the Portland USACE district. All nationwide permit 57 requirements would be followed. The culvert work would take place during the dry season; however, if flow is present during the work window, the work area would be isolated prior to construction, with a coffer dam, and flow would be maintained. In addition, all stormwater would be infiltrated on-site. 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: Less than 50 cubic yards of fill would be added or removed from wetlands to replace culverts. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized to ensure sediment and other contaminants stay within the work area, therefore, water bodies, floodplains, and fish would not be affected by the proposed project activities. Oregon's removal fill law enforced by the Department of State Lands would not apply as less than 50 cubic yards of fill would be added or removed from wetlands and waterways. All nationwide 57 permit conditions would be followed.

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: Land use in the area consists of transportation, timberland and transmission easement. The project would not result in permanent changes or impacts to land use. No specially-designated areas are present in the work areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be performed within existing transmission line right-of-way and access roads. Replacement of wood poles and associated components would be in kind and in the same location. The project would be consistent with the existing visual quality of the area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Exhaust and dust from utility and construction equipment may temporarily reduce air quality in the immediate project area. If needed, a fugitive dust plan would be implemented to control dust generation. With an appropriate dust control mitigation plan, the project would have minor and temporary impacts to air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise of the transmission line would not change. The project area is also located away from recreational sites and concentrated human activity.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA personnel would develop a site-specific health and safety plan to address any hazards during the proposed work. 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: All activities that require coordination with landowners have been completed by BPA Realty.

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

Signed: /s/ Zoe Wellschlagel

Zoe Wellschlagel
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: October 23, 2025