

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Lower Monumental-McNary Impairment Remediation Project

Project No.: WO-298907/ID-8210

Project Manager: Debbie Miller, TELC-TPP-3

Location: Walla Walla County, Washington and Umatilla County, Oregon

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

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to remediate impairments along eight spans of the Lower Monumental-McNary No. 1 500-kilovolt transmission line. An impairment is a location along the transmission line where the distance from the conductor to the ground surface is inadequate, per National Electrical Safety Code (NESC) standards, resulting in a threat to line reliability and posing a risk to public health and safety. The proposed work is necessary to ensure the line meets current NESC and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) reliability standards.

To remedy the identified impairments, soil would be excavated at specific locations under the transmission line to increase the clearance from the conductor to the ground surface. For the eight impairment locations, approximately 637 cubic yards of soil, comprising approximately 0.6 acre, would be removed with the resulting spoils spread along an adjacent upland area within the right-of-way (ROW) or hauled off. The table below lists the impairment spans along with area and volume for each excavation. Additionally, to gain needed access to the impairment between structures 2/2 to 3/1, approximately 0.7 mile of existing access road would be reconstructed or improved.

Lower Monumental-McNary Transmission line excavation area and volume		
SPAN	AREA (square feet)	VOLUME (cubic yards)
2/2-3/1	2,615	63
14/3-14/4	3,144	49
20/1-20/2	1,430	26
21/2-21/3	7,421	132
25/1-25/2	3,632	107
34/5-35/1	1,248	22
36/1-36/2	4,249	212
55/5-56/1	1,565	26
Total	25,304 (0.6 acres)	637

Proposed excavations, spoils spreading and removal, and road work would potentially utilize the following type of equipment: excavator, backhoe, graders, rollers, bull-dozers, and dump trucks.

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.

Laura Roberts
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Evaluation

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Evaluation

This evaluation 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: Lower Monumental-McNary Impairment Remediation Project

Project Site Description

The proposed project is in southcentral Washington within an existing transmission line Right-of-Way (ROW) and access road easement. The project area occurs at approximately 1600 feet above sea level on rolling hills of the Snake River Plateau. The project area consists of range, agricultural, industrial, and rural residential land uses. No surface water occurs within the general vicinity of the project work areas. Project location and land ownership listed below.

Township	Range	Section	Ownership
5N	29E	23	Private
7N	31E	13	Private
7N	32E	7	Private
9N	32E	26	Private
9N	33E	6	Private
10N	33E	1, 32	Private
12N	34E	10	Private

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, the Nez Perce Tribe, the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on September 22, 2025. BPA sent a determination of no historic properties affected on December 3, 2025 to the consulting parties. BPA received concurrence of its determination from DAHP on December 4, 2025 and SHPO on December 15, 2025. No other comments were received during the 30-day response period.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, work would be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor impacts to geology and soils, such as movement and compaction, would occur from excavation, spoils spreading, and access road work. Appropriate Best Management Practices (BMP) would be implemented prior to initiating ground disturbing activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status plant species or habitats occur within the project area.

Impacts to plants would be minor and would consist of temporary impacts from excavations totaling approximately 0.6 acre. Appropriate BMPs would be implemented prior to initiating ground disturbing activities. Excavation and spoils deposition areas would be stabilized and seeded upon project completion or as directed by landowners.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status wildlife species or habitats occur in the project area.

The project would have temporary noise and disturbance impacts to local wildlife species related to construction equipment noise and human presence. Impacts would be temporary and there is suitable adjacent habitat to access during disturbance.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to water bodies, floodplains, or fish are anticipated to result from the project as no surface waters occur within the general vicinity of the project work areas.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to wetlands are anticipated to result from the project as no wetlands occur within the general vicinity of the project work areas.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to groundwater or aquifers are anticipated to result from the project work as disturbance would not be deep enough to penetrate groundwater.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change in land use or specially-designated areas as a result of the project.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Impairment remedies and road upgrades would have minimal impacts, predominantly temporary, to visual quality and would be consistent with the underlying land uses and the existing transmission line ROW.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small amount of vehicle emissions would occur during project implementation. However, there would be no substantial changes to air quality during or after the implementation of the proposed action.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours from the proposed project. No ongoing noise increase is expected as a result of this project.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During project implementation, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Therefore, implementation of the proposed action 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 Realty is in coordination with private landowners.

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

Signed:

Laura Roberts
Environmental Protection Specialist