

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Urgent Kalispell-Kerr Structure 26/5 Wood Pole Replacement.

**Project No.:** P07049

**Project Manager:** Andrew Young – TEPL-TPP-1

**Location:** Lake County, MT

**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 perform in-kind replacement of one lightning damaged wood pole structure and associated structural/electrical components (e.g. cross arms, insulators, guy anchors, etc.) on the Kalispell-Kerr No. 1 structure 26/5. The existing poles would be removed utilizing a crane and the new poles would be placed in existing location. The existing pole is located in a culvert footing and the replacement pole would be placed in the same culvert. Backfill would be added to the culvert footing as needed and any additional backfill generated would be hauled offsite. The project would require a crane, boom truck, bucket truck, and a backhoe. The project site would be accessed using existing roads while the ground is frozen and no access road or landing improvements would be needed.

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.

/s/ Adrienne Wojtasz

Adrienne Wojtasz

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange

Katey C. Grange

Date: January 13, 2026

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:** Urgent Kalispell-Kerr No. 1 Structure 26/5 Wood Pole Replacement

## **Project Site Description**

Proposed maintenance activities would be conducted along the Kalispell-Kerr No.1 transmission line located within the Flathead Indian Reservation. The reservation includes a variety of agriculture, rangeland, pastures, and wetlands with strong sloping alluvial fans, stream terraces, and rough badlands along the Flathead River. The proposed pole replacement is located in a wetland.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA called the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT) on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025, to discuss the urgent project and the need for work to proceed as soon as possible. BPA determined that the work would not affect historic properties based on previous surveys and previous cultural resource monitoring efforts. The CSKT concurred on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025, with that determination, however, given the cultural sensitivity of the area, it was requested that a CSKT tribal monitor be present during construction activities.

Notes:

- CSKT tribal monitor to be present during repair activities.
- BPA's TLM shall carry with them onsite BPA's Post-review Discovery Plan of Cultural Resources Procedure. BPA TLM would review the procedure prior to conducting the work.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Localized soil disturbance would occur during wood pole replacement. Standard erosion control measures would be utilized as necessary.

Notes:

- Excess material to be hauled off-site for disposal.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minimal or no disturbance to vegetation is anticipated during structure replacement. There would be no effect to ESA-listed plant species. No impacts to state or federally sensitive species are anticipated. Project activity would be limited to already impacted transmission line rights-of-way and structure location and would not substantially alter existing plant species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In general, the project would have a small impact to wildlife and habitat related to temporary disturbances associated with elevated equipment noise and human presence. The project would have no impact to state or federally listed sensitive species.

Notes:

- Drive on existing access roads.
- Reduce work area footprint to the least necessary to safely do the work.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project area is located in a large wetland (see below). The structure would be accessed by transmission line maintenance under frozen conditions and sediment would be contained to the work site and excessive material would be hauled off site. Therefore, no impacts to water bodies, floodplains, and fish would occur.

Notes:

- Excess material would be hauled off-site for disposal to minimize sedimentation.

## **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The transmission structure is located in a large wetland, with culvert footings supporting the existing wood poles. The structure would be accessed by transmission line maintenance equipment under frozen conditions; therefore, no temporary fill such as wetland matting would be required. The wood poles would be replaced in-kind, by removing the damaged wood poles, replacing the pole with a new wood pole, and backfilling within the culvert. The proposed action meets the criteria of the Clean Water Act Section 404 maintenance exemption, for "maintenance, including emergency reconstruction of recently damaged parts, of currently serviceable structures". Therefore, no authorization under the Clean Water Act Section 404 and 401 is required.

Notes:

- Work to be performed during the winter while under frozen conditions.
- Excess material would be hauled off-site for disposal to minimize sedimentation.

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities are not expected to impact groundwater or aquifers. While the maximum depth of disturbance would be about 15 feet below ground surface and could be to groundwater depth, the pole would be replaced in an existing culvert to minimize groundwater interactions.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project location is within the Flathead Indian Reservation managed by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (CSKT). No changes would be made to the land use.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is not expected to impact visual quality. All work would be performed within existing transmission line right-of-way. Replacement of the wood pole and associated components would be in-kind and replaced in the same location.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have a temporary impact on air quality from a small amount of vehicle emissions generated during construction.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be temporary construction noise. Operational noise of the transmission line would not change.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would allow safe and timely access to the transmission line, which would help reduce outage times and maintain reliable power 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: BPA Cultural and Realty personnel have coordinated work with the CSKT.

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

Date: January 13, 2026

Adrienne Wojtasz

Physical Scientist (Environmental)