

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Minor Insulator and Airway Light Replacement Project

**PP&A No.:** 7118

**Project Manager:** Kai Teel, TFVK-ROSS MHQA

**Location:** Cowlitz County, WA and Columbia County, OR.

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B1.3 Routine Maintenance; B3.2 Aviation Activities

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to replace insulators and airway lights in kind on transmission line structures along selected locations on the Longview-Allston No. 3 & 4, and Paul-Allston No. 2. A helicopter would be utilized to reach the structures and a boat crew would be available for river emergencies. No ground disturbance would occur apart from a landing zone located on a road near Paul-Allston No. 2 structures 46/2. No access road or staging area improvements or landing zone site preparation would occur. The project would occur and conclude the spring and summer of 2026. A summary of the structures to receive replacements are below in Tables 1 and 2.

**Table 1. Tower equipment replacement**

Transmission Line	Replace: airway lights and insulators
Paul-Allston No. 2	46/2, 47/1, 47/2 and 48/1

**Table 2. Tower equipment replacement**

Transmission Line	Replace: airway lights on structures
Longview-Allston No. 3 & 4	2/4, 3/1, 3/2 and 4/1.

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 the current *DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Implementing Procedures*, 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/ Zoe Wellschlager*  
Zoe Wellschlager  
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

*/s/ Katey C. Grange*  
Katey C. Grange                      Date: May 27, 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: Minor Insulator and Airway Light Replacement Project

### **Project Site Description**

The project is located in Northwestern Oregon and Southwestern Washington, specifically within the Coast Range and Puget Lowlands ecoregions. The project area also encompasses the sub-ecoregions of Volcanics, Willapa Hills, and Cowlitz/Chehalis Foothills. It spans both sides of the Columbia River and includes Lord Island. The overall climate in this area is mild with significant rainfall.

The dominant vegetation in the project area consists of stands of deciduous trees, notably black cottonwood, mixed with various shrubs such as Himalayan blackberry and Scotch broom. Flat agricultural fields, resulting from deforestation, are present both nearby and within certain sections of the project area. The project area is situated near an industrial portion of Longview that contributes to existing human activity and noise levels in the project area. The land within the project area is a combination of privately owned property and land managed by the State of Oregon.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA has determined, per 36 CFR 800.3(a)(1), that the project is a type of activity that does not have the potential to cause effects on historic properties, assuming such historic properties were present.

Notes:

- In the event any archaeological material is encountered during project activities, work would be stopped, and the BPA environmental lead, archaeologist, and project manager would be immediately notified. Reasonable measures would be taken to protect the discovery site, including any appropriate stabilization or covering.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minimal to no ground disturbance would occur through the use of a landing zone on a road near Paul-Allston No. 2 structures 46/2. Ground disturbance would be further minimized by staging materials in a trailer. All other work would take place in a helicopter.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minimal to no ground disturbance would occur due to the utilization of a helicopter. In addition, no federal special-status or state listed are present.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction on the project would likely temporarily disturb wildlife in the area due to the presence of humans and the additional noise from helicopter activities. However, helicopter operations would be used only periodically to bring linemen and supplies to each tower structure. When not in use, the helicopter would be turned off. Disturbances on the project due to noise and human presence would be temporary and limited to the already impacted right-of-way and access roads near the city of Longview and the Columbia River that has elevated background noise. In the long term, the project would not alter the long-term footprint or operational noise of the line; therefore, wildlife and associated habitat would not be affected in the long term.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) tool indicates the potential presence of several ESA-listed species, including Columbia white-tailed deer, in the project area.. Nearby ESA-listed wildlife are either not present in the project area or habituated to baseline noise and human presence in the area. Temporary project noise levels are not anticipated to exceed baseline levels. Additionally, no critical habitat designated under the ESA exists within the project 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 planned, with the exception of having a safety boat on standby for emergencies. Therefore, these activities would not introduce new disturbances to water bodies, floodplains, or fish.

### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Because helicopters would be used for transmission line maintenance, no ground-disturbing work is planned in wetland areas. The landing zone would be located on a roadway to avoid further ground disturbances.

### **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No activities would occur that would impact groundwater or aquifers. In the advent of a spill, nearby project vehicles would be equipped with spill kits.

## 8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is not located in a specially designated area. Land use in the area consists of transportation, recreation, agricultural and transmission easement. Roads near the project area could still be utilized by recreationists and there are many alternative recreational areas nearby for the public to utilize during the project work period. The project would not result in permanent changes or impacts to land use.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Replacement of insulators and airway lights on transmission line towers would not change the existing visual quality of the area.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The primary impact on air quality from the project would come from helicopter exhaust and dust kicked up by the aircraft. However, these effects would be temporary. The majority of emissions from helicopter operations typically occur at higher altitudes, minimizing ground-level impact.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Helicopter operations would generate noise, though it would be temporary (intermittently for approximately 4 to 8 hours in one particular location) and would occur during daylight hours. The operational noise of the transmission line itself would remain unchanged. The project area is situated near Longview, a city with various industrial facilities that contribute to existing human activity and noise levels.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: To ensure safety, BPA personnel would have a boat on standby for emergency water rescues. The proposed work is essential for the continued safe and reliable operation of the transmission line and to maintain consistent power delivery to 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 have been coordinated with land managers and landowners, including the State of Oregon, which owns land on Lord Island. No environmental concerns or requests were made.

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

Signed: /s/ Zoe Wellschlager      Date: May 27, 2026  
Zoe Wellschlager  
Physical Scientist (Environmental)