

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Wildfire Prevention and Mitigation for Priority Switch Sites

PP&A No.: 7138

Project Manager: Lisa Schmidt, TIPL-TPP-1

Location: Lane, Linn, and Columbia counties, Oregon; Douglas, Pend Oreille, and Benton counties, Washington; Cassia County, Idaho

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

Description of the Proposed Action:

BPA proposes to increase the fuel-free zone surrounding field switch transmission towers using gravel and geotextile fabric beneath field switches and create maintenance friendly buffer zones near switches. BPA proposes to create fire-resistant landings by spraying herbicide and mowing around 13 priority switch towers, laying down fire-prevention geotextiles, pinning with staples, and then covering with clean, weed-free gravel. Work areas are expected to be 100 feet by 100 feet at each priority switch structure. No new access roads, grading, or structural construction would occur.

Transmission Line/ROW	Structure #	Township	Range	Section	County, State	Ownership
Alvey-Martin Creek No. 1	22/8	21S	3W	SEC18	Lane County, OR	Private
Alvey-Martin Creek No. 1	22/9	21S	3W	SEC18	Lane County, OR	Private
Latham Tap to Alvey-Martin Creek No. 1	1/2	21S	3W	SEC18	Lane County, OR	Private
Albany-Lebanon No. 1	3/3	11S	3W	SEC19	Linn County, OR	Private
Albany-Lebanon No. 1	6/6	11S	3W	SEC34	Linn County, OR	Private
Albany-Eugene No. 1	18/2	14S	4W	SEC3	Linn County, OR	Private
Albany-Eugene No. 1	18/6	14S	4W	SEC3	Linn County, OR	Private

Sacheen-Albani Falls No. 1	7/2	31N	45E	SEC19	Pend Oreille County, WA	Private
Grand Coulee-Foster Creek No. 1	21/4	29N	27E	SEC22	Douglas County, WA	Private
Grandview-Red Mountain No. 1	14/6	10N	26E	SEC32	Benton County, WA	Private
St. Helens-Allston No. 1	13/6	6N	2W	SEC14	Columbia County, OR	Private
St. Helens-Allston No. 1	13/7	6N	2W	SEC14	Columbia County, OR	Private
Unity-West Burley No. 1	7/3	10S	22E	SEC25	Cassia County, ID	Private

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/ Julianna Martin

Julianna Martin

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: July 2, 2026

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: Wildfire Prevention and Mitigation for Priority Switch Sites

Project Site Description

The Alvey-Martin Creek No. 1, Latham Tap to Alvey-Martin Creek No. 1, Albany-Lebanon No. 1, Albany-Eugene No. 1, and St. Helens-Allston No. 1 project site areas all occur within the Willamette Valley ecoregion. The Willamette Valley ecoregion is characterized by fluvial terraces and floodplains with mosaiced vegetation. The Grand Coulee-Foster Creek No. 1 and Grandview-Red Mountain No. 1 project site areas occur within the Columbia Plateau ecoregion. The Columbia Plateau ecoregion is characterized by arid sagebrush steppe and grasslands. The Sacheen-Albani Falls project area occurs in the Northern Rockies ecoregion, characterized by forested mountains of Douglas-firs, lodgepole pines, and spruce trees. The Unity-West Burley project area is within Snake River Plain ecoregion, characterized by sagebrush steppe and barren lava fields. All project areas are on private land; land uses include rural residential, developed areas, agricultural, and rangelands.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On May 27, 2026, BPA initiated consultation for proposed activities to lay fire-prevention geotextile material around 15 switches to reduce the risk of wildfire starting during field switching activities in Cassia County, Idaho; Benton, Douglas, Grant, Pacific, and Pend Oreille counties, Washington; and Columbia, Linn, and Lane counties, Oregon with a determination of No Historic Properties Affected. On May 27, 2026, the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) concurred with BPA's determination of No Historic Properties Affected with the stipulation for an unanticipated find plan. OR SHPO responded acknowledging the request for consultation on May 28, 2026, and on June 22, 2026, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation concurred with BPA's determination of No Historic Properties Affected. The 30-day response period expired June 26, 2026. No other comments were received from consulting parties.

Notes:

- If any Post-Review cultural resources are identified during construction, crews are required to stop work within 30 meters of the find and must call the cultural resources lead for appropriate next steps.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All activities would be above ground with no ground disturbance anticipated. All work sites would be stabilized during project work with geotextile and weed-free gravel, preventing soil erosion and migration off site.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Herbicide use and mowing would be utilized to remove excess vegetation, including grasses, forbs, and other low-growing vegetation, before laying down geotextile fabric and gravel. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status plant species near the project area, and no suitable special-status species habitat is present. Project activities would not substantially alter surrounding plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Local wildlife 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.

In accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), BPA obtained an official species list from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on April 17, 2026. Due to a lack of proximity, unsuitable habitat, or disturbed or developed project areas for Canada lynx, grizzly bear, North American wolverine, marbled murrelet, northern spotted owl, streak horned lark, western snowy plover, yellow-billed cuckoo, bull trout, Fender's blue butterfly, Franklin's bumble bee, , BPA made the determination of No Effect to ESA Species. There is no designated critical habitat within the project areas.

Notes:

- Food storage orders which require properly possessing or storing any food, refuse or other attractant [36 CFR 261.58(cc)] would be followed in grizzly bear habitat.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No water bodies or floodplains are located within the project area.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are located within the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All activities would be above ground with no ground disturbance anticipated. No impacts to groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All project areas are within BPA Right-of-Ways; there is no expected change to land usage. There are no specially-designated areas within the project areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be performed within existing transmission system rights-of-way and would be consistent with the existing viewshed.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction activities would result in a minor and temporary increase in dust and vehicle emissions in the local area. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the project.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During construction, use of vehicles and equipment and general construction activities would create noise above current ambient conditions. There are no noise-sensitive receptors near the project work areas, and there would be no long-term change in ambient noise following completion of the project.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA personnel would have site-specific best management practices to address any hazards during the proposed work. The proposed work is necessary to ensure ongoing safe and reliable operation of the transmission system 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: BPA has notified private landowners.

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

Signed: /s/ Julianna Martin

Julianna Martin

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: July 2, 2026