

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Eugene – Alderwood No. 1 115-kV Rebuild and Upgrades

Project No.: P01292

Project Manager: Tina Edwards, TIPL

Location: Lane County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine maintenance; B1.13 Pathways, short access roads, and rail lines; B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities; B4.13 Upgrading and Rebuilding Existing Transmission Lines.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to rebuild about 9.5 miles of the Alderwood Tap section of the existing Eugene - Alderwood 115-kV transmission line. The project would extend from structure 9/6 through 19/4 at the Alderwood Substation which is owned and operated by Blachly Lane Electric CO-OP (BLEC). The Alderwood Tap line was built in 1982 as a radial line that serves the Emerald People's Utility District (EPUD) through Cheshire Substation and serves BLEC through Alderwood Substation. The rebuild is needed due to existing wood pole structures, insulators, and conductors reaching the end of their service life. New structures would correct structural failures that have been occurring over the past several years during extreme weather events. Further, to remedy lightning caused outages, this project would install a new overhead grounding wire.

A total of 159 existing single wood-pole structures would be replaced with light-duty steel monopole structures. The new structures would have an average height of 70 feet, which is about 10 feet higher than the existing structures. New structures would be anchored in the ground measuring approximately 20 feet in depth and 3 feet in width. Additionally, two engineered steel monopole structures anchored with 20 feet deep and 5 feet wide concrete pier footings would be located at structure 11/9 and 15/7. To accommodate structural loading for the new footings, new structure locations would shift ahead or back approximately 20 to 50 feet from current locations. The current structures 15/19 through 18/2 are double circuit with existing distribution circuits from both EPUD and BLEC underneath. During construction, these existing distribution circuits would be transferred to the new structures while remaining energized with a bypass shoo-fly. New jumpers and disconnect switches would be installed at the Cheshire Substation near structures 11/9 and 11/9.1 and Alderwood Substation after structure 19/5.

All existing structure hardware such as conductors, insulators, guy wires, and guy anchors would be removed. Existing structures and guy anchors would be removed by excavating around the bases of existing equipment and lifting or pulling out of the ground. If the existing structures or anchors are unable to be safely removed from their current ground locations, they would be cut approximately two feet below grade and retired in place. Any remaining holes would be backfilled to ground level with clean backfill material, and excess soil would be dispersed onsite at level grade. The old structure poles and associated hardware would be hauled offsite and disposed of in accordance with all applicable regulations.

The existing access road network would be used for construction and approximately 0.5 miles would be improved or reconstructed. Access road improvements consist of light blading of existing road surface, placement of rock, and compaction. Access road reconstruction consists of heavier blading of existing road surface to remove ruts and washouts, placement of rock, and compaction. About 0.3 miles of new access roads would be constructed within existing easements. New access road construction consists of blading a new access road footprint to establish the road prism, placement of rock, and compaction within a 24-foot-wide footprint. Planned road improvements also include the replacement of 11 cross drain culverts and installation of 4 drain dips to provide drainage and road prism stability. Replacement culverts would be of the same diameter as the existing culverts. Additionally, two 24-inch-diameter and 32-foot-long cross stream culverts would be installed where the newly-proposed roads cross over existing drainage ditches in the 14/10 and 15/7 spans.

Additional supporting work for this project includes replacing 25 gates and associated fencing along with installing 42 new landings. Removal of existing damaged or malfunctioning gates and fencing would be replaced with new gates and fencing of similar type in the same locations as previous gates and fenceposts. Gate and fence post removal/replacement would not require excavation greater than was necessary to install the original gate and fence. New landings would be on average approximately 30 feet wide by 50 feet long. Landings would be graded and graveled to allow modern equipment such as electrical line trucks (including equipment with outriggers) to access the structure sites and perform maintenance. To safely operate equipment during construction, BPA may remove vegetation and brush within and outside of the existing right-of-way and access road routes and structure landing areas. Vegetation would be removed by hand cutting or mowing before the existing line is rebuilt or planned access road work commences. For any mowing outside of the existing rights-of-way (ROWs), BPA would acquire the appropriate rights from the underlaying property owner.

To facilitate materials storage needs, an approximately 1-acre material storage yard would be constructed south of the Cheshire substation in a previously disturbed area. The new material storage area would need approximately 7,260 cubic yards of fill to be brought into the area to match the existing Cheshire substation grade. The storage yard would be rocked with crushed gravel at an approximate 12 inch depth. Stormwater drainage would be provided by two new outfall swales located on the southern border of the yard. Drainage swales would be connected to existing drainage ditches by new 6 inch-diameter pipes. To provide security for stored materials, a new approximately 8-foot-high chain-link fence would be installed along the 1,000-foot perimeter of the new material yard. Access to the yard would be proved by a new 80-foot-long, 24-foot-wide gravel access road approaching south from the current parking area that is located west of the county paved road. Access into the new storage yard secured by a new 30-foot-wide gate installed within the new fence perimeter. BPA would construct the yard and turn over ownership to EPUD upon completion of the project.

BPA may acquire temporary access easements from underlaying land owners as needed to conduct work from, and traverse, their respective lands. No new permanent BPA easements would be required for this project. Standard transmission line construction vehicles and equipment would be used to complete the proposed action, such as a boom truck, light duty crane, bucket truck, backhoe, truck-mounted auger, skid-steer, road grader, bulldozer, dump trucks, pulling and tensioning equipment, and light-duty work trucks. The proposed action would temporarily disturb approximately 35 acres and permanently disturb approximately 28 acres. The anticipated construction window would occur in three annual electrical outage phases occurring each July and last an approximately 4 to 6 weeks each. The first phase would start mid-July 2026, and subsequent phases would start in July of 2027 and 2028 respectively. The estimated completion date for all work is anticipated to be October 2028.

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.

Nicholas Johnson
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.

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Project Site Description

The project is located near the southern extent of the Willamette Valley along Oregon state highway 36 (Township 16 South, Range 4 West, Section 7 and; Range 5 West, Sections 10, 11, 12, 19, 2538, 39, 46, 49, 52, 57, 58 and 59). The project area extends over a distance of approximately 9.5 miles starting at the intersection of Highway 99 and OR 36 two miles south of Junction City following OR 36 from east to west, through the unincorporated communities of Cheshire and Goldson, before terminating at the Blachly PUD Alderwood Substation.

Majority of the project area is located immediately adjacent to Highway 36 right-of-way. Land uses surrounding the project area are primarily rural residential and agricultural with flat topography. The new storage yard would be located north of the existing farm field within EPUD's existing parcel. Grass seed farms are common throughout the area with some farms containing rotational cover crops. The Long Tom River, Flat Creek, Amazon Creek, Bear Creek, and smaller tributaries cross through the project area draining south to north. Majority of the project area is within delineated wetland areas due to the predominant soils in the area being classified as hydric drained wet prairie argixerolls. Vegetation within the project area is predominantly grasses and shrubs common of the Willamette valley ecoregion.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Consultation was initiated with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, the Oregon Department of Transportation, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on September 17, 2025. On September 18, 2025, SHPO responded and assigned SHPO No. 25-1218 to the consultation. No other comments were received from consulting parties. BPA sent a cultural resources survey report with the determination of no adverse effect to historic properties to all consulting parties on April 29, 2026. On May 30, 2026, the 30-day response period expired with no comments being received from any consulting parties.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA 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 with Conditions

Explanation: Soils and rock below the soil layer would be disturbed by new structure footings, guy anchors, new storage yard construction and along with the access road construction and associated supporting work. About 194 cubic yards of soil and rock disturbance is expected with the installation of the new structure footings and another approximate 14,500 cubic

yards could be disturbed by the new storage yard construction. All excavated material would be backfilled and any excess material would be used to help bury existing structures left below grade and/or spread thinly around the new structure footings and landing work areas within the existing right-of-way.

Notes:

- Vehicle and construction equipment would stay on existing right-of-way areas near landings, access roads, staging areas, and material yards.
- Soils would be stabilized during and after construction to prevent erosion and sedimentation as specified in the Storm Water Pollution Prevention (SWPP) Plan developed for the project. BMPs from the Oregon Stormwater Management Manual would be correctly used to minimize sediment discharge offsite.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project area was surveyed for both Federal and state special-status species during the 2025 growing season. No occurrences were found of special-status species or habitats within the proposed project area of potential impact. The removal of grasses, shrubs, and weeds would occur along access road routes, in new structure landing and pole footing areas, and the new storage yard area. Vegetation would grow back rapidly following construction of the project except in the new storage yard area, new access road routes, and new structure footings and landing areas. Impacts to existing plant communities are expected to be low.

Notes:

- Vehicle and construction equipment would stay on existing right-of-way areas, access roads, staging areas, and material yards.
- Post-construction and in the fall, a native seed mix would be used to reseed all disturbed areas.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The entire project area was surveyed for wildlife occurrences during the summer of 2025. No Federal or state special-status species are known to occupy the project area. Majority of the project area is located along Oregon State Highway 35, which does not provide quality habitat for wildlife species. Local wildlife would likely re-locate away from the area during construction and return post completion. Noise levels during construction are unlikely to impact local species due to the existing roadway noise being similar to the expected noise levels for construction.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No work would occur within the ordinary high-water mark of jurisdictional waterways. The project area transects two perennial creeks that are upper headwaters of the Long Tom River along with seven intermittent creeks. The lower section of the Long Tom River near the tributary is currently listed as rearing habitat for Chinook salmon, but three low-head dams downstream block fish passage to the project area. No culvert work is planned within perennial or intermittent creeks. The two stream culverts are planned for existing agriculture drainage ditches and would be conducted during the dry season. No vegetation removal would occur within riparian areas or within 50 feet of ordinary high water mark of jurisdictional waterways. Surface runoff would be the main source for any minor impacts to water quality, though appropriate erosion control best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented to reduce potential erosion entering waterbodies. Proposed activities would not impact any other water bodies, floodplains or fish habitat.

Notes:

- To prevent any contamination from moving off-site via surface runoff, the SWPPP would address federal, state, and local requirements for fuel and chemical storage, spill containment and cleanup, contractor training, and spill material disposal activities. Equipment would be inspected weekly for leaks and drips with requirements for prompt repairs.
- SWPP and erosion control BMPs would be installed to prevent sediment runoff from impacting water quality to nearby streams.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Thirty-five wetlands were delineated within the project area. Majority of wetlands areas were found to be disturbed by ongoing agriculture and rights-of-ways maintenance. Impacts to wetland areas would result in approximately 2.5 acres of permanent fill from new structure footings, access road improvements, and storage yard construction and 3.0 acres of permanent removal (excavation) from existing pole removal, new footing construction, road improvements and yard construction. All removal and fill activities that occur within the wetland areas would be conducted in a manner that minimizes disturbance to jurisdictional waters and preserves existing hydrology and vegetation to the extent practicable. The Project would incorporate avoidance and minimization measures to eliminate or reduce impacts to wetlands and other waters to the maximum extent practicable. Construction methods and BMPs would address erosion and sediment control, containment of construction materials, handling of hazardous materials, and protection of upland, wetland, and riparian vegetation. Appropriate Clean Water Act permitting would be acquired prior to construction in delineated wetlands and all permit and certificate terms and conditions would be implemented. No other impacts would occur to wetland areas as a result of this project.

Notes:

- The notice to proceed with construction in delineated wetland areas would be predicated on the successful permitting approvals from US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL) including all compensatory mitigation requirements.
- Conducting work during the dry season and/or utilizing wetland mats where necessary to limit soil compaction.
- Limiting ground disturbance to the minimum area necessary to complete the work.
- Clearly marking wetland and water boundaries prior to construction to prevent unauthorized disturbance.
- Installing erosion and sediment control (ESC) measures prior to ground disturbance activities.
- Refueling and equipment staging in upland areas outside wetlands and waters.
- Maintaining spill prevention and response materials onsite.
- Immediately stabilizing disturbed soils following completion of work.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: New structure footing excavation could have minor impacts to surface-level groundwater. Construction BMPs and Clean Water Act permit and certificate terms and conditions would limit impacts in the relatively small and localized areas for potential ground water occurrence. Excavation would not extend to depths that would impact aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would not permanently alter existing land use and is not located in a specially designated area. Some temporary short duration disruptions to traffic along Highway 35 may occur with construction equipment entering and leaving work areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is currently a high voltage transmission corridor and would remain so after project completion. There would be a minor change in structure heights, but when viewed from a distance, the 10-foot increase would be negligible. The new storage yard would slightly increase the fenced area associated with the existing EPUD Substation that shares a perimeter fence boundary and matches the current use for the parcel and would not result in a significant visual change post storage yard completion. Access road work, landings, and gates would be consistent with the existing character and would not result in a substantial change in the overall appearance in the project area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some minor, local impacts to air quality would occur due to construction activity and vehicular traffic, however impacts would be temporary and insignificant. Work areas are generally located in rural settings and would not impact nearby human receptors.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction activity would generate some noise. However, impacts would be local and relatively minor lasting for 2-3 days at each structure. All project activity would occur during daylight hours. Most of the project area is rural agriculture and near a busy highway. No long-term change in operating noise would occur as a result of this project.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would help maintain reliable power to the region by replacing aging transmission infrastructure that has reached the end of its service life. During project implementation, all standard safety protocols would be followed. 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 coordinated with Oregon Department of Transportation, BNSF Railways, EPUD, BLEC, USACE, Oregon DSL and underlying private land owners to notify of project activities and would continue to coordinate during construction. BNSF owns the underlying property at structure 9/6, no work or equipment is anticipated to intersect railroad crossings. No other coordination, involvement or coordination is needed.

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

Signed:

Nicholas Johnson
Environmental Protection Specialist