

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Actions to Accommodate Construction of Idaho Power Company's Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line

Project No.: P07376; LURR-20250374, L0516

Project Manager: Gerri Colburn, TIPP-CSB-2

Location: Morrow County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.24 Property transfers; B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities; B4.10 Removal of electric transmission facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes a series of actions that would enable Idaho Power Company (IPC) to construct its 500-kilovolt (kV) Boardman to Hemingway (B2H) transmission line within right-of-way (ROW) that is currently occupied by BPA's 69-kV Boardman-lone No. 1 transmission line in Morrow County, Oregon. These proposed actions would include:

- Disposing real estate rights on the Naval Weapons System Training Facility (NWSTF) Boardman property from Boardman-lone No. 1 structure 4/5 to structure 18/5 (not including either structure).
- Removing Boardman-lone No. 1 from structure 3/2 to structure 17/1.
- Removing associated substation equipment in Boardman Substation.
- Accommodating a request by Columbia Basic Electric Cooperative (CBEC) to tie into Boardman-lone No. 1 between structure 23/9 and structure 24/1.

BPA is proposing to abandon the remainder of the transmission line in place. BPA is not currently proposing to remove the remaining deenergized portions of Boardman-lone No. 1 from Boardman Substation to structure 3/1 and from structure 17/2 to structure 23/8. If in the future, BPA proposes to remove these portions of the line, BPA would conduct appropriate environmental compliance prior to decision-making about removing additional portions of the transmission line.

IPC on BPA's behalf would remove all existing Boardman-lone No. 1 transmission structures between structures 3/2 and 17/1. Line crews would detach the conductor from each transmission structure and lower it onto a temporary traveler suspended from the structure. Pulling and tensioning equipment would be staged within previously disturbed and graveled areas at either end of a designated section of transmission line. The pulling equipment at one end would slowly reel in the old conductor, through the travelers, and onto large spools, while the tensioner at the other end would maintain back-tension.

With the conductor removed, IPC would remove the H-frame double wood pole transmission structures. For all transmission structures located on the NWSTF Boardman property (i.e., structure 4/6 to structure 17/1), specific removal methods are required to minimize ground disturbance. A small crane and trailer would be operated from Bombing Range Road and additional existing gravel access roads. The crane arm would hold the transmission structure, while work crews cut the wood poles at the bases with a chainsaw. Once the poles have been removed at the base, the crane would load them onto a trailer stationed off the NWSTF Boardman property or on the existing gravel access roads. For transmission structures located on private property (i.e., structure 3/2 to structure 4/5), IPC could use the same removal methods as on NWSTF Boardman, though equipment may be staged in the right-of-way at each structure. Alternatively, IPC could excavate around the bases of the structures and either cut the wood poles at 6 inches below grade and remove them or remove the poles entirely. Structures 3/1 and 17/2 would be safely secured in place. Removal of the transmission structures on NWSTF Boardman would result in little to no temporary ground disturbance and no permanent ground disturbance. Depending on the methods, removal of 14 structures on private property would result in up to 0.8 acres of temporary ground disturbance and no permanent ground disturbance.

BPA would remove all substation equipment associated with Boardman-lone No. 1 from Boardman Substation, including power transformers, potential transformers, current transformers, disconnect switches, and breakers as well as all associated foundations, oil containment systems, bus work, and conduit back to the nearest vault. All associated equipment racks would be removed from the substation control house. BPA would install a short section of new 115-kV bus work and pedestals to ensure the remaining bus and substation equipment is structurally sound. These actions would occur within the existing substation yard, and no ground disturbance would extend beyond the perimeter previously disturbed during the original construction of the substation yard.

CBEC would tie its new transmission line into Boardman-lone No. 1 between structures 23/9 and 24/1, which would allow for continued energization of Boardman-lone No. 1 from structure 24/1 to lone Substation. BPA would remove structure 23/9 (using one of the previously described removal methods) and would use the existing conductor to span from structure 24/1 to a new dead-end H-frame double wood pole structure to be constructed, owned, and operated by CBEC. BPA's proposed action would be limited to removing structure 23/9, cutting and tensioning the conductor, and attaching the conductor to the new CBEC transmission structure. Structure 23/8 would be safely secured in place. In total, removing structure 23/9, staging and operating vehicles and equipment, and securing structure 23/8 would result in up to approximately 1.5 acres of temporary ground disturbance and no permanent ground disturbance.

All work, including staging materials and equipment, would occur within BPA's existing Boardman-lone No. 1 transmission line ROW or within Boardman Substation. Decommissioned wood poles and equipment would be appropriately disposed of off-site. Equipment required to complete the work would include a backhoe, excavator, crane, bucket truck, and flatbed truck.

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)). Further, BPA is authorized to dispose of its interest in real property pursuant to sections 2(e) and 2(f) of the Bonneville Project Act. 16 U.S.C. § 832a(e)-(f).

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.

FOR Walker Stinnette
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: Actions to Accommodate Construction of Idaho Power Company's Boardman to Hemingway Transmission Line

Project Site Description

The project site is located entirely within BPA's Boardman-lone No. 1 transmission line ROW and within BPA's Boardman Substation in Morrow County, Oregon. Removal of Boardman-lone No. 1 would occur from structure 3/2 to structure 17/1, which is located on private property (structure 3/2 to structure 4/5) and the U.S. Department of the Navy Naval Weapons System Training Facility (NWSTF) Boardman property (structure 4/6 to structure 17/1). The CBEC intertie would occur between structures 23/9 and 24/1, which is located on private property. The NWSTF Boardman property is a remnant high-quality sagebrush/grassland vegetation community in a region largely disturbed by agriculture and historic grazing. The private properties are characterized by common grasses and non-native cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*) at the margins of agricultural fields. No wetlands or surface waters are present within the project site. Outside of the transmission line right-of-way, the surrounding land use is primarily dryland and irrigated agriculture interspersed with rural residential properties.

All proposed actions at Boardman Substation would occur on BPA fee-owned property inside of the existing control house or within the existing substation yard, which was previously disturbed and covered with gravel during the original construction. No vegetation, wildlife habitat, wetlands, or surface waters are present.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Pursuant to its responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR 800, BPA has determined that the proposed action is a federal undertaking that has the potential to cause effects on historic properties and initiated consultation with the following parties:

- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon
- Nez Perce Tribe
- NWSTF Boardman
- Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

BPA conducted background research and an intensive field survey of the Area of Potential Effects (APE). BPA previously determined that Boardman-lone No. 1 is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Properties (NRHP), per the *BPA Pacific Northwest Transmission System Multiple Property Document* (BPA MPD). In addition, one isolated find (consisting of fence posts, railroad ties, and barbed wire) was identified within the APE. No other cultural or historic resources were identified within the APE.

BPA made separate determinations for the CBEC tie line construction (Project No. OR 2023 076a) and for the removal of Boardman-lone No. 1 transmission structures and

substation equipment from Boardman Substation (Project No. OR 2023 076b). BPA determined per 36 CFR 800.5(a) that construction of the CBEC tie line would result in no adverse effect to historic properties. BPA determined that removing 14 miles of Boardman-lone No. 1 would result in the line no longer retaining sufficient historic integrity to be considered eligible for listing in the NRHP. Therefore, per 36 CFR 800.5(a), BPA determined that implementation of the proposed action would result in an adverse effect to historic properties, specifically Boardman-lone No. 1. However, pursuant to Stipulation II.C. of the *Programmatic Agreement Among the Bonneville Power Administration, the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, the Washington State Historic Preservation Office, the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to Address Effects to BPA Transmission Lines* (Transmission Line PA), BPA's compliance with the programmatic mitigation in Stipulation III resolves adverse effects and no additional consultation is required. No other historic properties would be affected by the proposed action.

No comments were received from the consulting parties.

Notes:

- Include the required documentation of the proposed action's adverse effect to Boardman-lone No. 1 in the Annual Report, which will be prepared pursuant to Stipulation IV of the Transmission Line PA.
- Implement the Post Review Discovery Procedure in the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during implementation. Discontinue all ground-disturbing activity 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

Explanation: The proposed action would cause up to approximately 2.3 acres of temporary soil disturbance where removing the transmission structures and staging and operating vehicles and equipment would result in minor soil compaction and rutting. Temporarily disturbed soils would stabilize as vegetation is reestablished and would eventually return to pre-existing conditions following completion of the proposed action. The proposed action would not impact geology.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would temporarily crush, strip, or bury up to approximately 2.3 acres of common grass species and non-native cheat grass. Little to no vegetation disturbance would occur on the relatively undeveloped NWSTF Boardman property, which supports a greater proportion of native shrub and grass species. Temporarily disturbed areas would eventually return to near pre-existing conditions following completion of the proposed action. No special-status plant species, including plants listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), were identified within or near the project site.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The relatively undeveloped NWSTF Boardman property has known populations of the following state special-status species:

- Washington ground squirrel (*Urocitellus washingtoni*)
- Ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*)
- Long-billed curlew (*Numenius americanus*)
- Short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus flammeus*)
- Western burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia hypugaea*)

In addition, the property could support such grassland/shrubland migratory birds, such as golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), sage sparrow (*Artemisiospiza nevadensis*), sage thrasher (*Oreoscoptes montanus*), and Brewer's sparrow (*Spizella breweri*). Portions of the project site, particularly in the southeastern region of the NWSTF Boardman property, overlap with a Washington ground squirrel Resource Management Area as well as occupied colony avoidance and dispersal areas. As such, the transmission structure removal methods specified in the Description of the Proposed Action are required on the NWSTF Boardman property to minimize ground disturbance that could impact these species. Furthermore, removal of the transmission structures is scheduled for late summer and early fall, which is outside of the critical nesting and breeding seasons for these species.

The proposed action could result in minor and temporary disturbance of normal wildlife behavior and wildlife displacement from elevated noise and human presence. However, there would be no permanent modification of wildlife habitat, and temporarily disturbed or displaced wildlife would likely reoccupy the site following completion of the proposed action. With implementation of the transmission structure removal methods as described in the proposed action, the project would have no effect on special-status wildlife species, including wildlife listed under the federal ESA.

Notes:

For structure removal activities on NWSTF Boardman:

- Minimize ground disturbance activities on NWSTF Boardman, particularly those areas containing sensitive wildlife species.
- Stage cranes and trailers from Bombing Range Road or existing gravel access roads.
- Cut poles at the base and load onto trailers staged on existing roads.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No water bodies, floodplains, or fish-bearing streams are located within or near the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies and floodplains and would have no effect on special-status fish species or habitats.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present within or near the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground excavation would not reach depths to ground water, and standard construction BMPs would reduce the potential for inadvertent spills of hazardous materials that could contaminate groundwater or aquifers. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would occur within an existing transmission line right-of-way and substation yard and would be consistent with existing land uses. The proposed action would not impact adjacent land uses, including operations at NWSTF Boardman.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would result in a perceptible change in the appearance of the project site. During construction, the presence of construction equipment and general construction activities would cause temporary visual impacts. Removal of the Boardman-lone No. 1 transmission structures and removal of substation equipment from Boardman Substation would not diminish the visual quality of the project site and would remove transmission facilities from the landscape. One of the two new CBEC transmission structures would be a different material and design than the current Boardman-lone No. 1 structures. However, the new structures would be within the existing transmission line ROW and would be approximately the same height as the existing transmission structures. This permanent visual change would be consistent with the existing visual quality of the area. The project site is not located in a visually sensitive area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would cause a minor and temporary increase in dust and emissions in the local area. Standard construction BMPs would suppress dust. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the proposed action.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would result in minor and temporary noise from vehicles, equipment, and general construction activities, which could intermittently exceed current ambient conditions. However, there are no private residences or other noise-sensitive properties or land uses within 0.25 miles of the project site. Noise would be temporary and intermittent and would only occur during typical working hours (approximately 7 AM to 7 PM). There would be no long-term change in ambient noise following completion of the proposed action.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: All standard safety protocols, including deployment of traffic control flaggers along Bombing Range Road, would be followed throughout implementation of the proposed action, as necessary. The proposed action would not generate or use hazardous materials or otherwise create conditions that would increase risk to human health and safety. Therefore, the proposed action would not be expected to impact human health and safety.

Notes:

- Employ all standard safety protocols, including deployment of traffic control flaggers along Bombing Range Road, as necessary.

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: The proposed action would occur within BPA's existing transmission line easement. BPA and IPC have notified and been in coordination with the underlying landowners and the US Navy NWSTF Boardman and would continue to coordinate as necessary throughout the proposed action.

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

Signed:

FOR Walker Stinnette
Environmental Protection Specialist