

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Driscoll-Astoria Hillcrest Creek Bridge Installation Project

Project No.: P04157

Project Manager: Rob Moriarty, TEGB-CSB-2

Location: Clatsop County, OR

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance, B1.20 Protection of Cultural Resources, Fish and Wildlife Habitat

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to install a bridge over Hillcrest Creek. The bridge installation project is necessary to: create a stable safe crossing of Hillcrest Creek for BPA operations, open a passage for native migratory fish where none currently exist, and reduce the frequency Hillcrest Creek overtops the roadway during the rainy season which results in scouring of the stream and roadbed.

The proposed bridge installation project would occur along mile 13 of the Driscoll-Astoria No. 1 115-kV transmission line. The work would occur on an existing access road where a blocked undersized culvert has compromised the integrity of the road and created a barrier to native migratory fish. The proposed project would initially isolate the work site, salvage fish within the exclusion area, and then dewater the site. The existing access road approaching the new bridge would be improved to reestablish a 14-foot-wide driving surface. Eco-block (precast concrete blocks) 2-foot by 2-foot by 4-foot walls would be utilized along the edges of road to minimize fill quantity and reduce impacts to the adjacent wetland. The existing culvert would then be removed along with previous road fill and unsuitable material within the stream. The top one foot of suitable native streambed material would be salvaged and reused for the new stream channel, if possible. The streambed and streambanks would be widened and regraded to match the upstream and downstream ordinary high-water mark and stream contours. Precast concrete bridge abutments would be installed and armored with riprap before placing the new 43 to 50-foot-long steel bridge. Salvaged streambed material would be placed back in the stream and supplemented with suitable material obtained from an offsite source. Large habitat boulders would also be installed and embedded at a minimum of 30% below the streambed grade.

The project would take approximately two weeks. General equipment used for the proposed bridge construction would be an excavator, rollers, graders, dump trucks, a crane to set the steel bridge, and hand tools.

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.

Laura Roberts
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: Driscoll-Astoria Hillcrest Creek Bridge Installation Project

Project Site Description

The project area is located within an existing transmission line right-of-way (ROW) on privately-owned land in northwestern Oregon at Township 8N, Range 8W, and Section 23. The proposed bridge installation project would span Hillcrest Creek, which has a meandering channel with an adjacent wetland and flows approximately south to north towards the Columbia River. The site of the bridge installation project is a one-lane gravel BPA access road which intersects the paved two-lane Hillcrest Creek Road at a gated approach. The BPA road provides the only access to three existing transmission line structures for BPA's ongoing maintenance and operations. Vegetation consists of mostly shrubs and grasses within the ROW and mixed coniferous and deciduous forest outside the ROW.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation in support of the Allston to Astoria Rebuild Project on May 3, 2022, with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz, the Oregon Department of Forestry, Clatskanie People's Utility District, Clatskanie Rural Fire Protection District, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). On March 15, 2024, BPA sent determination letters to the consulting parties that the implementation of the proposed project would result in no adverse effect on historic properties and no adverse effect to the Allston-Driscoll No. 2 and Driscoll-Astoria No. 1 transmission lines. BPA received Section 106 concurrence from SHPO on April 11, 2024. No other comments were received during the 30-day response period.

An addendum survey report, adding the proposed bridge installation action to consultation (20260720), was sent to SHPO and consulting parties on July 20, 2026. Within that letter, BPA determined that BPA's previous determination remained the same of no adverse effect to historic properties. BPA received Section 106 concurrence from SHPO on August 11, 2026. No other comments were received during the 30-day response period.

Notes:

- Implement the Post Review Discovery Protocol 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: Minor impacts, such as movement and compaction, to geology and soils would occur from the bridge installation project. Appropriate Best Management Practices (BMP) would be implemented prior to initiating work to minimize further erosion. Long-term benefits resulting from the project would include stability of the site and future reduction of erosion and sedimentation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status plant species or habitats occur within the project area.

Impacts to plants resulting from the project would be minor. A few small trees and shrubs may be removed as part of the project and would be replaced with native shrubs at a 2 for 1 rate.

Disturbed areas would be seeded with a hydrologically appropriate native seed mix upon project completion. Appropriate BMPs would be implemented prior to initiating ground-disturbing activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status wildlife species or habitats occur in the project area. The project would have temporary noise and disturbance impacts to local wildlife species related to construction equipment noise and human presence. Impacts would be temporary and suitable habitat occurs adjacent to the project area accessible to wildlife during construction.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Approximately 60 linear feet of stream would be opened that was previously inaccessible to native migrating coho and coastal cutthroat. To accomplish this, approximately 831 square feet [65 cubic yards] of fill material would be excavated to deepen and widen the stream channel. To reestablish native habitat within the stream channel, suitable native streambed material would be salvaged and reused and approximately 831 square feet (65 cubic yards) of offsite sourced suitable material would be added. There would be an additional 475 square feet of temporary impact to Hillcrest Creek resulting from access road approaches, bridge installation, and stream channel widening. The proposed bridge installation would have beneficial impacts to water bodies and fish due to reduction of future erosion, sedimentation, and turbidity, and establishing fish passage for native migratory coho and coastal cutthroat trout.

Impacts to Hillcrest Creek, a Section 404 of the Clean Water Act jurisdictional perennial stream, are permitted by the Portland District US Army Corp of Engineers under a non-notifying Nationwide Permit 57. Additionally, the project would be conducted under an approved Oregon Department of State Lands General Authorization (66191-GA) for temporary and permanent impacts to Waters of the State.

BPA completed Section 7 Endangered Species Act (ESA) consultation (approval WCRO-2014-00007-11070) with National Marine Fisheries (NMFS) under *Standard Local Operating Procedures for Endangered Species in the NMFS Programmatic Biological Opinion, dated September 22, 2016* (WCRO-2014-00007) following a 30-day notification for impacts to ESA-listed Threatened Lower Columbia River coho and coho Essential Fish Habitat.

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) reviewed the application and design plans for the proposed bridge installation project. ODFW determined the project is consistent with the state's fish passage design criteria and granted approval (PA-01-0302).

A few small trees and shrubs may be removed as part of the project. They would be replaced with native shrubs at a 2 for 1 rate. Disturbed areas would be seeded with a hydrologically appropriate native seed mix upon project completion. Appropriate BMPs would be implemented prior to initiating ground-disturbing activities.

Notes:

- All permit and authorization requirements and ESA consultation conservation measures would be implemented during the project.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Approximately 0.022 acre of wetland habitat adjacent to Hillcrest Creek would be permanently lost due to bridge abutments and road improvements leading to the new bridge. Within the wetland, the project would remove about 662 square feet (36 cubic yards) of existing road fill and native material and would place approximately 974 square feet (130 cubic yards) of structural material. Additionally, the project would result in about 2,096 square feet of temporary impacts to the wetland.

Impacts to the wetland adjacent to Hillcrest Creek, a Section 404 of the Clean Water Act jurisdictional wetland, are permitted by the Portland District US Army Corp of Engineers under a non-notifying Nationwide Permit 57. Additionally, the project is being conducted under an approved Oregon Department of State Lands General Authorization (66191-GA) for temporary and permanent impacts to Waters of the State.

Disturbed areas would be seeded with a hydrologically appropriate native seed mix upon project completion. Appropriate BMPs would be implemented prior to initiating ground-disturbing activities.

Notes:

- All permit and authorization requirements would be implemented during the project.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor impacts to groundwater, such as alteration in flow paths and localized compaction may result from the project's excavation and filling in the stream and wetland.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change in land use or specially-designated areas as a result of the bridge installation project. The bridge installation site is a BPA road that provides access to three transmission line structures. There is no landowner residence or building at the terminus of the road. An approximately two-week interruption of road use for the landowner to visit that section of their property would result from the proposed project. BPA would coordinate with the private landowner to ensure that they are aware of the schedule and access restrictions to minimize disturbance to the use of their property.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Changes to visual quality resulting from the project would consist of culvert removal, stream channel widening, and bridge installation. These impacts would be minor and consistent with existing access road and the surrounding transmission line corridor.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small amount of vehicle emissions would occur during bridge installation project. Because the project location is on private land behind a gate, the bridge installation is not anticipated to increase vehicle traffic and therefore would not result in substantial increase in emissions following the project.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours from the proposed bridge installation. Because the project location is on private land behind a gate, the bridge project is not anticipated to increase vehicle traffic and therefore would not result in substantial increase in noise following the project.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During the bridge installation, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Bridge installation would create a stable safe passage for BPA operations; therefore, implementation of the proposed action would result in a benefit to human health and 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 Realty is in communication with the private landowner.

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

Signed:

Laura Roberts
Environmental Protection Specialist