

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Taft-Bell No. 1 Urgent Slide Repair

PP&A No.: P07413

Project Manager: Donna Martin – TELF-TPP-3

Location: Kootenai County, Idaho

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

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to repair approximately 1.5 miles of access roads damaged by a landslide near Structure 57/1 of the Taft-Bell No. 1 Transmission Line located on United States Forest Service (USFS) Idaho Panhandle National Forest land in Kootenai County, Idaho. Work would include access road improvement, culvert repair, and slide repair along USFS roads NF-1530 and NF-437.

At NF-1530, BPA proposes light road grading to include smoothing, reshaping, and filling irregularities to access the culvert replacement and slide repair areas. Repairing the slide area on NF-1530 would include benching and backfilling a 30-foot-wide by 30-foot-long area. The average backfill depth would be about 25 feet. Granular backfill such as sand, gravel, or crushed rock would be covered with 6- to 24-inch-diameter riprap at a minimum thickness of 4 feet. A 12-inch-diameter perforated drainpipe would be installed at the bottom of the slide area, along with geocomposite sheet drains to prevent future washouts.

Repair of the culvert washout on NF-437 would entail recontouring the dry scour channel created when the nearby stream left its native channel due to fallen trees. Stream debris vegetation would be removed from the culvert. Rip rap armor at the culvert inlet and outlet and at the entrance of the scour channel would be installed. The roadway would be repaired by backfilling and compacting select granular backfill and capping it with 8-inch road base aggregate. It is anticipated that no water would be present at the time of work. If water is present, a coffer dam would be installed upstream of the work area and water would be pumped around the area of impact or reroute water to a central channel.

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/ Adrienne Wojtasz

Adrienne Wojtasz

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange Date: August 26, 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: Taft-Bell No. 1 Urgent Slide Repair

Project Site Description

Proposed maintenance activities would be conducted along access roads near the Taft-Bell No. 1 transmission line. The proposed action is located in the Northern Rocky Mountains level III ecoregion in the Idaho Panhandle National Forest. The proposed action would occur within and immediately adjacent to the Taft-Bell No. 1 access roads to the transmission line. Because of the steepness of the terrain, drainages along the project area are mostly ephemeral with only a few exhibiting stream characteristics such as beds and banks.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On June 25, 2026, BPA initiated consultation by sending a Determination of Effects memo with an Area of Potential Effects (APE) map and a determination of no adverse effects to historic properties to the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, the Nez Perce Tribe, and the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). On June 26, 2026, SHPO concurred with BPA's delineation of the APE and the determination of effects and assigned 2026-898 to the consultation. No other responses from Consulting Parties were received within 30 days.

On July 17, 2026, BPA expanded the APE to include the improvements to access roads and sent an updated combined Determination of Effects memo with an updated APE map and a determination that was still no adverse effects to historic properties. The letter was again sent to the Coeur d'Alene Tribe, the Nez Perce Tribe, and the Idaho SHPO. On August 17, 2026, SHPO concurred with BPA's updated APE and with the determination of effects. The 30-day response period expired and no other comments were received from 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. Please provide the project sponsor with a copy of BPA's Post-Review Discovery Procedure.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Localized soil disturbance would occur during slide remediation, scour stream bed recontouring and culvert repair. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized as necessary. All areas would be stabilized with crushed rock. In the long term, the road repairs would help to stabilize the area and reduce future soil instability.

Notes: The following minimization measures would be implemented

- During construction all appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be used to implement site specific erosion and sediment control.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In order to comply with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), on August 24, 2026, BPA obtained an official species list for the project from USFWS. No Federal, state, or USFS special-status plants are in the project area. There is little to no existing vegetation in the work area that would be disturbed.

On National Forest System lands managed by the Idaho Panhandle Forest, BPA would comply with the Standard Operating Procedures for limiting the spread of invasive species and fire prevention as directed in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA).

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In general, the project would have temporary impacts to wildlife and habitat related to disturbance associated with the equipment noise and human presence. However, the surrounding mountains and forest provides ample habitat and cover for disturbed wildlife. The project would have no effect to ESA-listed species. No impacts to state sensitive species or USFS sensitive species are anticipated.

Project activities would be limited to already impacted access roads and would not substantially alter the footprint or operational noise of the access roads; therefore, wildlife and associated habitat would be temporarily disturbed by noise during construction, but there would be no long-term effect.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: It is anticipated that no water would be present at the time of work. If water is present, a coffer dam would be installed upstream of the work area and water would be pumped around the area of impact or the water would be diverted to a central channel through the repair area.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbing activities are anticipated in wetlands or other water bodies that occur along the project. Erosion control measures would be implemented to prevent sedimentation.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No impacts to ground water or aquifers are anticipated due to the minimal amount of ground disturbance that would not be deep enough to penetrate groundwater.

Notes: The following minimization measures would be implemented to minimize groundwater contamination potential.

- Appropriately stocked spill response kits would be located on vehicles, and other equipment,

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No change in land use would occur and project activities would not impact existing land uses. Due to the washouts, these roads are currently not being used by the public and USFS users. Upon project completion, the roads would be returned to useable condition for USFS users.

Notes: For the project crossing the Idaho Panhandle National Forest, the Memorandum of Understanding between the Bonneville Power Administration United States Department of Energy and the United States Forest Service United States Department of Agriculture Regarding Transmission Facilities and Access to Those Facilities on National Forest System Lands Standard Operation Procedures listed below would be implemented:

- Section V Transmission Facilities
- Section X Fire control communication and coordination
- Appendix E Fire Prevention and Suppression

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have a minimal impact to visual quality. The proposed work is on existing roads and would introduce riprap along the roadway, which would cause a visual effect in the area. This area is not in a visually sensitive location and would not be visible outside the work location.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small amount of vehicle emissions and dust may occur temporarily during construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some temporary construction noise from repair activities would occur during daylight hours. There are no noise sensitive areas near the work area.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to human, health, and safety are anticipated. The proposed action would allow safe and timely access to the transmission line which would help reduce outage times and maintain reliable power 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: BPA Realty personnel and environmental have coordinated the proposed project activities with the Idaho Panhandle National Forest prior to project initiation and any concerns regarding proposed access road maintenance activities have been addressed.

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

Signed: /s/ Adrienne Wojtasz
Adrienne Wojtasz
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: August 26, 2026