

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Chehalis-Raymond Access Road Bridge Replacement

Project No.: P05225

Project Manager: Donna Martin, TELF-TPP-3

Location: Pacific County, Washington

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 replace a bridge on private land that provides access to the Chehalis-Raymond No. 1 transmission line in the Line Mile 28 area in Pacific County, Washington. Reliable access to BPA transmission lines allows crews to maintain its high-voltage transmission network, inspect the transmission line rights-of-ways for impairments and vegetation management actions, and safely restore power during emergency situations.

The bridge replacement work would include removing the existing bridge and replacing it with a longer 16-foot-wide by 80-foot-long prefabricated bridge. The existing bridge abutments would be left in place, and new abutments would be placed outside of the existing abutments above the ordinary high-water mark of Fern Creek to support the new bridge. Bridge approaches would be built up approximately 5 feet on either side of the new bridge. An existing 8-inch-diameter road culvert would be replaced with a 24-inch-diameter culvert to improve the hydraulic connectivity between the waterway east of the access road and the tributary to Fern Creek. The new culvert would help to prevent flooding of the access road. A crane would be used to remove the existing bridge and install the new bridge. A temporary 40-foot-wide by 60-foot-long crane pad with an 80-foot-long by 12-foot-wide gravel road to access the crane pad would be constructed in a field south of Fern Creek and adjacent to the existing access road. No in-water work on Fern Creek would be required during bridge replacement.

Approximately 120 feet of the existing access road south of Fern Creek would be reconstructed and shifted to the east to better align with the bridge approach. Additionally, approximately 500 feet of existing access road from Emerson Avenue (frontage road north of Highway 6) to the bridge would be improved. Improvements would consist of light grading and placement of gravel on the road.

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.

Jeremy Doschka
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 area is located in Township 12 North, Range 7 West, Section 1 on Fern Creek in the Willapa Hills in the Coast Range in southwestern Washington in Pacific County. Land ownership is private and consists of agricultural use. Wetlands have been delineated in the project vicinity, but not within project work areas. Fern Creek, a tributary to Fern Creek, and one waterway are located in the project area. The project area is mapped as Essential Fish Habitat.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA sent out an initiation and determination letter on May 22, 2026 (BPA CR Project No.: WA 2025 200; DAHP Log No.: 2026-05-03551) to the Quinault Indian Nation, Shoalwater Bay Tribe, Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Skokomish Indian Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation, Squaxin Island Tribe, Chinook Indian Nation, and the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). On May 23, 2026, DAHP concurred with BPA's area of potential effects (APE) and the determination of No Historic Properties affected, with the stipulation for a post-review discovery plan. The Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation concurred with BPA's determination of effects on August 2, 2026. No other responses were received.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural resources or historic properties are inadvertently encountered during the implementation of the 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

Explanation: Approximately 3,000 square feet (less than 0.1 acre) of ground disturbance would occur from shifting the access road to the east and compacting soils under the new road. Soil compaction would also occur to approximately 3,500 square feet from the temporary crane pad and spur road to the crane pad in the field, adjacent to the existing access road. Once the project is complete, the crane pad and spur road would be removed. Sediment control BMPs would be installed prior to construction to avoid sediment runoff into Fern Creek and adjacent waterways. Following construction, disturbed areas would be seeded to stabilize soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no documented occurrences of any special-status plant species within or near the project site, and no suitable special-status species habitat is present. The

proposed action would result in the removal or disturbance of approximately 3,000 square feet of mainly grasses and some small trees and shrubs from the access road shift. The temporary covering of approximately 3,500 square feet of cultivated grasses from the temporary crane pad and spur road would occur in the adjacent field.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Bridge and access road construction would temporarily disturb local wildlife due to human presence and noise from construction equipment. Disturbance would be temporary, limited to daylight hours, and limited to the bridge location and access road area between the bridge and Emerson Avenue.

Habitat mapping and field verification surveys were conducted by Turnstone Environmental Consultants in 2025 and resulted in no occurrences or suitable habitat identified for federal ESA-listed or state special-status species within the 0.25-mile action area of the project area. BPA determined the project would have no effect to ESA-listed wildlife species such as marbled murrelet, northern spotted owl, Monarch butterfly, and Suckley's cuckoo bumblebee.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: A stream delineation of the proposed project area was conducted by Turnstone Environmental Consultants in 2025. Fern Creek, a tributary to Fern Creek, and one waterway were mapped in the project area. No in-water work would be conducted in Fern Creek during bridge replacement activities. Minor temporary impacts, such as elevated turbidity, would occur to the tributary to Fern Creek and waterway from culvert installation.

Fish present in the work areas would be salvaged and experience temporary effects associated with handling. A temporary, small turbidity pulse may be generated upon rewatering of the isolated work areas. Due to the work isolation measures and slow rewatering process, the turbidity plume is expected to be minor. Fern Creek is mapped for winter steelhead, coho, and Chinook salmon and the tributary to Fern Creek is mapped for coho salmon. The proposed project is in Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). Any effects to EFH are covered by BPA's programmatic biological opinion with NMFS: *Endangered Species Act Section 7 Programmatic Conference and Biological Opinion and Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act Essential Fish Habitat Consultation for Standard Local Operating Procedures for Endangered Species to Administer Maintenance or Rebuild Projects for Transmission Line and Road Access Actions Authorized or Carried Out by the Bonneville Power Administration in Oregon, Washington, and Idaho* (SLOPES PBO; WCR-2014-1600, September 22, 2016). It was determined that, by complying with the project design criteria listed within the SLOPES PBO, potential effects to EFH would be consistent with those evaluated and addressed in the SLOPES PBO. No ESA-listed fish or designated critical habitat occurs in the project area; therefore, no effects to ESA-listed fish species would occur.

The project waterway impacts would be addressed under a non-notifying Nationwide Permit (NWP) 3, maintenance. BPA would adhere to all permit conditions included in NWP 3 and erosion control BMPs would ensure that no sediment would enter Fern Creek or its tributary.

Notes:

- All in-water work would occur during the established in-water work period for the waterways.
- During culvert installation on the tributary, the work area would be isolated prior to ground disturbance with a coffer dam and dewatered. A fish biologist would be present to salvage any fish and aquatic life in the work area. Downstream flows would be maintained at all times with an in-channel diversion pipe or other method.

- Implement erosion and sediment control best management practices during construction and post-construction to stabilize disturbed soils near the waterways.
- Implement project design criteria requirements in the SLOPES PBO.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: A wetland delineation of the proposed project area was conducted by Turnstone Environmental Consultants in 2025. Wetlands were mapped adjacent to the project area; however, no impacts to wetlands would occur during project construction.

Notes:

- BPA would implement best management practices (BMPs) to avoid impacts to wetlands, e.g. installation of wetland mats and erosion and sediment control BMPs as necessary.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to groundwater or aquifers are anticipated as the proposed project ground disturbance would not be deep enough to penetrate groundwater.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not change existing land use, nor is the project within a specially-designated area. Due to access road work, there would be a temporary impact on the landowner's ability to access portions of their property. This impact would be temporary, short in duration, and has been clearly communicated to the landowner during the project planning phase. The road and bridge improvements ultimately benefit both the landowner and BPA in the long term by providing safe and reliable access.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Short-term changes to visual quality would occur from construction activities and presence of vehicles and equipment but would return to pre-project conditions when the project is complete. The new bridge would be slightly longer and higher than the existing bridge, but still consistent with the visual quality of the 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. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the project.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction activity would generate noise. However, impacts would be local and relatively minor. All project activity would occur during daylight hours, 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: During project implementation, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Therefore, implementation of the proposed action would not impact human health or safety. Overall, the project would improve the safety and reliability of the bridge and provide safer access to transmission structures during inspection, maintenance, and emergency response.

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 has been in communication with the landowner and will continue to coordinate as needed.

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

Signed:

Jeremy Doschka
Environmental Protection Specialist