

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: FY22-FY24 The Dalles, Bundle #2 Priority Poles Replacement Project

Transmission project bundle number: P05085

PP&A No.: 6738

Project Manager: Alla Kirsanova, TEPL-TPP-1

Location: Gilliam, Sherman, and Wasco Counties, Oregon

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 in-kind wood pole structures and associated structural/electrical components (e.g., cross arms, insulators, guy anchors, etc.) along the Big Eddy-Demoss and Demoss-Fossil transmission lines. Additionally, the project includes road maintenance and reconstruction of access roads to access the structures on the Big Eddy-Demoss and Demoss-Fossil and additionally on the Hood River-The Dalles transmission line, which is located in the general area. All project locations are in The Dalles transmission line maintenance (TLM) District.

Nine wood pole structures along the Big Eddy-Demoss and Demoss-Fossil transmission lines would be replaced. After current pole structures are removed, replacement poles would be placed within approximately 5 feet ahead or back on line from the existing structure. Where needed, the project also includes improvements to existing access roads and landings associated with the transmission line rights-of-way that currently may inhibit access at the specified locations for routine maintenance. Dependent on the structure location and access road conditions, the project may include surface improvements of existing access roads and landings (blading and rocking) as well as improvements and in-kind replacements of existing drainage features. No new access roads would be established. Two approximately 50-foot by 50-foot landings may be constructed at each structure location.

The proposed project would allow safe and timely access to the transmission lines which would reduce outage times and maintain reliable power in the region. 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 *DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Procedures* (dated June 30, 2025), 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/ Greg Tippetts

Greg Tippetts

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: September 3, 2026

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

All structure replacements and access road work would be at specific locations along existing transmission rights-of-way in Gilliam, Sherman, and Wasco Counties, Oregon in BPA's The Dalles Maintenance District. All work would be done in existing managed rights-of-ways and access roads. Underlying land uses are private agricultural, private rangeland, and private rural forested. The site-specific locations and details are listed in table 1.

Table 1. Structure replacements in The Dalles District.

Transmission Line	Structure	TRS	County/State	Land Management
Demoss-Fossil	10/2	OR T1S R18E SEC12	Sherman, OR	Private Rangeland
	14/5	OR T1S R19E SEC20	Gilliam, OR	Private Rangeland
	19/4, 19/5	OR T2S R19E SEC16	Gilliam, OR	Private Rangeland
	40/4	OR T4S R21E SEC32	Gilliam, OR	Private Rangeland
	45/4	OR T5S R21E SEC22	Gilliam, OR	Private Rangeland
Big Eddy-Demoss	11/4, 11/7	OR T1N R15E SEC15	Wasco, OR	Private Agricultural
	15/5	OR T1N R16E SEC30	Sherman, OR	Private Agricultural
Hood River-The Dalles No.1	5/7 to 6/4 Roads	OR T2N R11E SEC10	Wasco, OR	Private Rural Forest

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In-kind wood pole replacement and reconstruction and improvements of existing access roads, have the potential to disturb surface soils within the proposed work areas. BPA Historic Preservation Program archaeologists examined the project and determined the proposed actions would have no adverse effect to historic properties. Pursuant to its responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR 800, on June 4, 2026, BPA initiated consultation with: the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Nez Perce Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (OR SHPO). The OR SHPO confirmed receipt of the consultation request on June 8, 2026, and did not provide any additional comments or requests for information within 30 calendar days of the receipt of submittal. No additional responses were received from the consulting parties within 30 days.

Notes:

In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA will 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. The BPA environmental lead, archaeologist, and project manager would be immediately notified. Reasonable measures would be taken to protect the discovery site, including any appropriate stabilization or covering.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All wood pole replacements would be in-kind and would be placed near the locations of the existing poles. Localized soil disturbance would occur during wood pole replacements and access road maintenance activities. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized as necessary.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some minor crushing or removal of existing vegetation could occur along the edges of access roads or surrounding transmission line structures. BPA obtained official species lists Under Section 7 of the ESA, from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for the project areas on August 25, 2026. No ESA-listed plant species, federal special-status species, or state listed species are known to be present in the project areas. The Natural Heritage database indicates some species of Oregon State sensitive plants may be present in the general project area. However, none are known to exist at specific project locations. Furthermore, the project locations have been maintained as access roads, vehicle staging areas, and open managed right-of-way that is not suitable habitat for the species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA obtained official species lists Under Section 7 of the ESA, from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for the project areas on August 25, 2026. No project locations are within or near any designated critical habitats or known occupied sites for listed species.

Work would occur in areas maintained as an open transmission line right-of-way corridors with little wildlife habitat. During project activities, work with heavy equipment may cause temporary disturbance to wildlife causing avoidance of the area. The disturbance would be of a short duration and would not affect any species' long-term activities.

Due to the lack suitable habitat and no known presence in the project areas, BPA has determined that the projects would have "no effect" on ESA-listed species or their critical habitat. No other special-status wildlife would be impacted by project activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project location on the Hood River-The Dalles transmission line is within the

general boundaries of the Lower Columbia River DPS for steelhead. Approximately ½ mile of project access road is located near Rock creek, a listed system for steelhead. The creek is located in a draw below the access road, averaging 200 to 300 linear feet from the proposed work. The project would include erosion control mitigation measures and other BPM installation to keep soils and runoff from leaving the project and the potential of entering the creek.

For the other proposed project locations, no in-water work or ground disturbance near waterways or any ESA-listed fish streams would occur. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized to stabilize the project sites during and after the maintenance activities. For all project locations, site restoration with native seed and mulch would be completed post construction.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are documented within the project area. Additionally, no documented wetlands are within the influence of the project sites.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities are not expected to impact groundwater or aquifers. The maximum depth of disturbance for pole installation would be about 12 feet below ground surface.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project locations are confined to the existing transmission line right-of-way corridors and off right-of-way access roads with legal rights. Surrounding land uses are private rangeland, private agricultural, and private rural forest. The project would not impact public land, including any recreational areas. Project work locations would be localized to the existing wood pole transmission structure and would not significantly impact the underlying properties.

The project location on the Hood River-The Dalles transmission line is located within the Columbia River George National Scenic Area (CRGNSA) boundaries. Access road work from structures 5/6 to 6/9 is located within the General Management Areas (GMA) F-1 Commercial Forest and F-3 Small Woodland. The project would not be subject to the CRGNSA management plan as the project would be maintenance and is covered under the BPA Savings Provision. A project information submittal was sent to the CRGNSA office on January 23, 2026. No response to the proposed work was received within the 30-day review and comment period.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed actions at existing facilities would not alter or affect visual quality. Structure replacements are in-kind and access road improvement work would occur on existing roads. The project would not result in a noticeable visual change from the existing structures and access roads. The project locations within the CRGNSA are not near any

Key Viewing Areas, (KVAs) and would not impact the visual quality or other aspects of the CRGNSA.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project work would be of a short duration and involves normal construction equipment activities. A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions is expected due to construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would be located away from any populated areas. Noise disturbance would be limited to general construction equipment activities, would be for a short duration, and would occur during daylight hours.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is considered normal construction and maintenance. The proposed work is necessary to ensure ongoing safe and reliable operation of the transmission line and to maintain power delivery in 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 notified and coordinated with the landowners in advance of the construction of the proposed project.

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

Signed: /s/ Greg Tippetts

Date: September 3, 2026

Greg Tippetts

Physical Scientist (Environmental)