

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Garrison-Taft No. 1 Interphase Repair Project

Project No.: 7167

Project Manager: Michael Stolfus - TFKF-KALISPELL

Location: Missoula County, Montana

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.2 Routine Maintenance; B3.2 Aviation Activities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to perform in-kind replacement of the interphase and hardware between structures 80/2 and 80/3 on the Garrison-Taft No. 1 transmission line via helicopter on private land in Missoula County, Montana. This work is necessary to maintain a safe and reliable high voltage transmission system and is anticipated to have a line outage in October 2026 for approximately three days.

The helicopter landing zone and staging area are within the one project action area. No ground-disturbing activities are anticipated, and existing access roads would be utilized to minimize impacts. Vehicles would remain on existing rights-of-way (ROWs), established access roads, structure sites, and the landing zone.

Work would be performed via helicopter using the human external cargo (HEC) method where a two-person crew is suspended from a helicopter to replace the broken interphase and hardware. All work would be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA standards. A water truck would be on site for fire and dust control. Other equipment would include a fuel truck and personnel support vehicles such as pickup trucks.

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/ Kylie Porter

Kylie Porter
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel Date: September 24, 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.

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Project Site Description

Proposed routine maintenance activities would be conducted on the Garrison-Taft No. 1 line between structures 80/2 and 80/3. The proposed action area is located in western Montana, in Missoula County. The project area is on private land and within the Northern Rockies ecoregion. The proposed action would occur within, and immediately adjacent to the Garrison-Taft No. 1 high voltage transmission corridor, access roads to the transmission line, and the helicopter landing zone.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Pursuant to its responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, BPA evaluated the proposed project and developed an Area of Potential Effect (APE). On August 10, 2026, BPA initiated consultation with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Montana State Historic Preservation Office. On September 2, 2026, the Montana SHPO concurred with BPA's determination of no historic properties affected. On September 9, 2026, the 30-day response period ended with no other comments received from the consulting parties.

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. A copy of BPA's Post-Review Discovery Protocol would be provided to the project sponsor.
- Should there be a change to the project design that would expand the project footprint, the BPA cultural lead must be contacted to determine if further review is necessary under Section 106. Additional consultation and field inventory may be necessary to address certain design changes.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance is anticipated.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), BPA obtained a species list on August 7, 2026, from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The Whitebark Pine is listed as Threatened within the project area. However, because there is no

anticipated vegetation or tree work, the project would have “No Effect” on the Whitebark pine.

No other Federal/state special-status plants are present in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have temporary impacts to wildlife and habitat because of disturbance associated with helicopter and equipment noise and human presence. However, the surrounding area of forest provides ample habitat and cover for potentially disturbed wildlife.

Project activities would be limited to the already impacted right-of-way and would not substantially alter the footprint or operational noise of the line. Wildlife and the surrounding area would temporarily be disturbed by the project work but would not be impacted long-term.

There are no ESA-listed species and no designated critical habitats within the project area. The project area is also outside any grizzly recovery zones.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no bodies of water within the project area. No in-water work is proposed for this project. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized to ensure sediments and contaminants do not enter any bodies of water.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands within the project area. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized to ensure sediments and contaminants do not enter any bodies of water.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to groundwater or aquifers are anticipated.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use would occur and project activities would not impact existing land use.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have minimal impacts to visual quality. The interphase and hardware are an in-kind replacement.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The impact to air quality would be minimal and temporary due to vehicle emissions and dust generated during construction.

Notes:

- A water tanker would be utilized to water the ground to prevent fugitive dust.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary construction noise and helicopter use would occur during daylight hours. The operational noise of the transmission line would not change.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would allow safe and timely access to the transmission line to reduce outage times and maintain reliable power 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 has coordinated project activities with the landowner at the proposed work location and would continue to coordinate during construction.

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

Signed: /s/ Kylie Porter

Kylie Porter

Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: September 24, 2026