

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Buck Butte Radio Site Access Road Improvement

Project No.: 6923

Project Manager: Ariel Kramer – TELF-TPP-3

Location: Klamath County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine maintenance, B1.13 Pathways, short access roads, and rail lines

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes conducting access road improvements and repairs along the Buck Butte Radio Station access road. The work would include the installation of two drain dips and thirteen water bars over about 2.3 miles.

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 1021.410(b) 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), BPA has determined that the proposed action:

- 1) fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D (see attached Environmental Checklist);
- 2) does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; and
- 3) has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion.

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

/s/ Wyatt Barrs

Wyatt Barrs

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel Date: September 28, 2026

NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Checklist

This checklist 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: Buck Butte Radio Site Access Road Improvement

Project Site Description

The project site is the stretch of access road beginning from the entrance located on Harpold Rd and ending at the Buck Butte Radio Site. The project does not cross any private or state lands but crosses onto BLM-managed lands immediately after the fourth gate along the access road and stays for the remainder of the project. Topographically the project site sits between 4,560ft – 5,300ft in elevation, and is bounded by Buck Butte to the northeast, and Dodds Hollow to the southwest. No wetlands are present within the project site, and two ephemeral streams are the only waterbodies present. Overall, the project site is used by private landowners and Federal/state agencies who conduct operations at the Buck Butte Radio Site.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On July 13, 2026, BPA initiated National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 consultation with the Klamath Tribes, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (CTWSRO), Bureau of Land Management Lake View District, Klamath Falls Field Office, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). BPA determined that the project would have no historic properties affected. No consulting parties responded with additional comments during the 30-day consultation period.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground-disturbing work is planned within the project area and would be limited to the boundaries of the road prism. The project area is located within the Applegate Terrane Group which consists of Serpentinite and complexly deformed and intermixed assemblage of medium to high grade metasedimentary and metavolcanic rocks with intrusive and ultramafic rocks. Due to the lithologic composition of the project area, erosion of the local geology is not a concern. Erosion control measures would be implemented to prevent any sediment from traveling offsite as well.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed or state or BLM-managed special-status species are present within the project area, and proposed work along access roads does not call for the disturbance of plants/vegetation.

- All State, BLM, ESA, and USFS special-status listed species were taken into consideration during this determination.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary wildlife disturbance would occur from noise and human presence during project work. Construction would be limited to a few days in duration, and no long-term habitat modification is anticipated.

An ESA species list was obtained from the Klamath Falls Fish and Wildlife office dictating numerous wildlife species potentially within the general project area, but none with any designated critical habitats present. No additional state-listed or BLM-managed sensitive species occur within the project area, and the proposed work would have no impact on their populations. Work within the project area would only occur on access roads which are not commonly directly inhabited by special-status species. Due to this, it has been determined that the proposed work would have no effect on wildlife.

Notes:

- All State, BLM, ESA, and USFS special-status listed species were taken into consideration during this determination

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No in-water work, riparian removal, or use of water is planned. No water bodies are present within the project area. Appropriate erosion control would be used to prevent sediment from travelling off site into any adjacent waterbodies.

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6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No work or disturbance within wetlands planned, and no wetlands present within the project area. Appropriate erosion control would be used to prevent sediment from travelling off site into any adjacent wetlands.

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7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Excavation would not extend to groundwater depths. Herbicide spray is planned to treat project site areas which have been identified to contain noxious weeds. The spraying would not take place on BLM lands, and all requirements and necessary coordination have been addressed by BPA in conjunction with BLM. Herbicide use would be limited to BLM-approved chemicals, logged and submitted to BLM, and completed by contractors which have historically worked within the project area as well as within BLM guidelines for the area.

Notes:

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8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would occur within the existing radio site access road and would be consistent with the existing land use at the site. The proposed action has the potential for temporary disruption of access road use to relevant landowners and Federal/state agencies during construction. Impacts would be due to the presence of construction vehicles entering, navigating, and exiting necessary access roads within the right-of-way, and are considered typical for the type of work that would be occurring. Signs and flagging would be used to designate areas where construction vehicles would be present. Vehicle presence and associated impacts would not persist past construction completion, and the project site is not located in a specially-designated area.

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9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would result in a perceptible change in the appearance of the project site during construction. During construction, the presence of construction equipment and general construction activities, including vegetation disturbance, would cause temporary visual impacts. This visual change would be consistent with the existing visual quality of the area. The project site is not located in a visually sensitive area.

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10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would cause a minor and temporary increase in dust and emissions in the local area. Standard construction BMPs would suppress dust. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the proposed action.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would result in minor and temporary noise from vehicles, equipment, and general construction activities, which could intermittently exceed current ambient conditions. However, noise impacts would be temporary and intermittent and would only occur during typical working hours (approximately 7 AM to 7 PM). There would be no long-term change in ambient noise following completion of the proposed action.

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12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All standard safety protocols would be followed throughout implementation of the proposed action to minimize risk to human health and safety. Therefore, the proposed action would not be expected to impact 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: All necessary landowners have been notified by Realty concerning proposed actions, and of any necessary involvement or coordination.

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

Signed: /s/ Wyatt Barrs

Wyatt Barrs

Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: September 28, 2026