

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** John Day-Big Eddy No. 1 500-kV Transmission Conductor Replacement and Access Road Repair Project

**Project No. (if applicable):** 2,544

**Project Manager:** Erich Orth - TEP-TPP-3

**Location:** Sherman and Wasco counties, Oregon

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

**Description of the Proposed Action:** BPA is planning to replace the conductor and associated hardware along BPA's existing John Day-Big Eddy No. 1 500 kV transmission line. Conductor and hardware replacement work would be minimally impactful, and is typically performed with line trucks accessing each structure site. BPA also is planning to improve approximately 18 miles of existing on and off ROW access roads associated with the John Day-Big Eddy No. 1 500 kV transmission line to allow safe and reliable access to the line. Road work includes but is not limited to; grading and shaping of roads, installation of geo-textile material, placing rock, compacting road surfacing, and installation of gates.

**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, July 9, 1996; 61 FR 64608, Dec. 6, 1996, 76 FR 63764, Nov. 14, 2011), 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/ Laura Roberts*

Laura Roberts

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

*/s/ Sarah T. Biegel*

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: June 29, 2017

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:** John Day-Big Eddy No. 1 500-kV Transmission Conductor Replacement and Access Road Repair Project

### Project Site Description

John Day-Big Eddy No. 1 500-kV Transmission Conductor Replacement and Access Road Repair Project is located in the following Township, Range, Sections listed below within Sherman and Wasco counties, Oregon. The project area is located within the Columbia River Gorge on private and public lands that include irrigated agricultural, range, and Deschutes River State Park with certain portions managed by the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area.

Township		Range		Sections
1	N	14	E	4-6
2	N	14	E	32-36
2	N	15	E	24-32
2	N	16	E	1,10-12, 14-17,19-21
2	N	17	E	6,7

### Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

<b>Environmental Resource Impacts</b>	<b>No Potential for Significance</b>	<b>No Potential for Significance, with Conditions</b>
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**1. Historic and Cultural Resources**



Explanation:

BPA initiated consultation on August 12, 2016, with the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, Nez Perce Tribe, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (Consulting Parties).

On August 8, 2016, BPA received concurrence from SHPO regarding the Area of Potential Effect APE. On September 15, 2016, The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon expressed an interest in conducting an ethnographic study of the project area. The Warm Springs conducted the ethnographic study in May 2017 and found no issues with the project. No concerns were raised by the Nez Perce and The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

On May 17, 2017, BPA sent the Consulting Parties a determination letter indicating that the project would have no adverse effect to historic properties. Concurrence was received from SHPO for the built resources on June 12, 2017. No other comments were received.

**2. Geology and Soils**



Explanation:

Minimal soil disturbance; most areas would be rocky and erosion control measures would be used.

3. **Plants** (including federal/state special-status species)



Explanation:

No special-status species present. Work is to be conducted in an existing transmission line right-of-way (ROW). There is no anticipated vegetation removal as part of the project. Any un-rocked disturbed areas would be seeded with a geographic and climate-appropriate seed mix.

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



Explanation:

No special-status species or designated habitat present. Work to be performed in existing ROW and road prism; no new habitat typical of the area would be disturbed.

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



Special-status fish species found in several streams within the project area (bull trout, steelhead [Middle Columbia River DPS]) would not be impacted as the project disturbance distance is located a minimum of 135 feet from the edge of the nearest stream. No riparian vegetation would be impacted. Because the construction areas are far from the water's edge and erosion control measures would be implemented, no sedimentation would occur.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation:

None present

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation:

No new wells or use of groundwater proposed; maximum depth of disturbance would be about 2 feet and spill prevention measures would be present.

8. **Land Use and Specially Designated Areas**



Explanation:

No vegetation removal is anticipated for this project. Work is to be completed in existing access road prism.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation:

No new structures would be installed. All work is to be completed within the existing ROW and access road prism and would not impact the visual quality of the surrounding environment.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation:

Temporary dust and vehicle emission due to construction.

11. **Noise**

Explanation:

Temporary noise due to road improvement and conductor replacement equipment.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation:

The project would not impact human health or 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, if necessary: Carry out ongoing consultation with NOAA Fisheries and US Fish and Wildlife Service for potential impacts to Threatened fish species and Critical Habitat.

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary: A qualified contractor certified in lead and asbestos abatement and building demolition would be used. Demolition debris would be handled and disposed of according to all applicable hazardous waste laws.

- 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, if necessary:

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### **Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Description: The proposed project is located on private range land, state park land, and within the Columbia Gorge Scenic Area (CGSA). BPA has submitted an application to the CGSA under the savings provision which was received and reviewed on October 26, 2016. BPA would continue ongoing coordination with the CGSA and landowners.

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

Signed: /s/ Laura Roberts

Laura Roberts

Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: June 29, 2017