

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Slatt-John Day No. 1, Access Road Maintenance

**PP&A No.:** 3862

**Project Manager:** Darin Bowman, Randall Browning, Access Road Engineer – TFLF-TPP-3

**Location:** Gilliam County, Oregon; BPA's The Dalles District

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

**Description of the Proposed Action:** BPA proposes to perform routine road maintenance, repair and improvements on an access road along the Slatt-John Day No. 1 Transmission Line. The work is necessary to maintain or repair existing infrastructure and roadway safety.

The work would be located in rural Gilliam County approximately 2 miles SE of US Hwy 84 exit #123 and would involve installation of a 24-inch x 38-foot long CMP culvert along an existing dirt/gravel access road and placement of approximately 200 cubic yards of rip rap within the drainage bed.

The culvert will help direct agricultural runoff under the existing BPA access road to maintain and restore access to the Slatt-John Day power line structures. The culvert would be located within upland environments in an erosional rill that drains two large irrigated agricultural fields-- this erosional rill drains surface water runoff from irrigation and seasonal high rainfall events. The road maintenance activities are proposed to be conducted during 2018.

**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/ John Wiley*

John Wiley

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

*/s/ Stacy L. Mason*

Stacy L. Mason

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: April 11, 2018

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:** Slatt-John Day No.1, The Dalles District, Access Road Maintenance Project

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### Project Site Description

A site evaluation was conducted by an Otak biologist on August 31, 2016 to evaluate site conditions and the surrounding environment. Land ownership within the project area is privately held. Land use within the project vicinity includes agriculture and open space. The approximate site elevation is at approximately 920 feet above sea level. The project is located in low-elevation bunchgrass-sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp) habitat typical of the region.

### Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. <b>Historic and Cultural Resources</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> BPA has determined the undertaking does not have the potential to cause effects on historic properties—the work would be located in an established road bed that has been re-graded and maintained several times in the last 50 years and the topography at that location consists of a steeply sided and sloped drainage susceptible to repeated annual flooding events.</p> <p>In the event that archaeological or historical materials are discovered during project activities, work in the immediate vicinity would stop, the area would be secured, and the SHPO and the environmental project lead would be notified.</p>		
2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The proposed roadway improvements would likely conserve soil resources by reducing erosion and degradation of the existing dirt/gravel road by channeling surface water run off underneath the road prism through a culvert. All disturbed soils outside of the road prism would be reseeded with a native seed mix appropriate for the region immediately following construction in order to further stabilize soils. No prime or unique farmlands would be affected. Therefore, the proposed action would have limited impacts to geology and soils.</p>		
3. <b>Plants</b> (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> No federal or state special status plant species that have the potential to occur in within the project area or in the immediate vicinity due to lack of suitable habitat. No trees would be removed as a result of the project, though approximately 500 square feet of sagebrush and rabbitbrush (<i>Chrysothamnus</i> spp) occurring within the drainage bed may be removed during installation of the culvert. All disturbed soils outside of the road prism would be reseeded with a native seed mix appropriate for the region immediately following construction or during the appropriate</p>		

seeding window. Therefore, the proposed action would have no effect on special-status plant species and limited impacts to other native and non-native vegetation.

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



Explanation: No suitable habitat for special-status wildlife species was found to occur within the project area. No federally-listed or proposed listed species or their designated critical habitats have been documented to occur within 2-miles of the proposed project limits. The road work actions would mainly occur within the existing road prism and within the drainage rill, limited to an area approximately 500 square feet; therefore, any impacts to non-listed wildlife species would be temporary in nature and limited to the construction window. Therefore, the project would have no impacts to federally-listed wildlife and limited impacts to other wildlife species.

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



Explanation: There are no permanently flowing waterbodies or floodplains present within the proposed work area. The project is located over an erosional or drainage rill that drains surface water runoff from two large irrigated agricultural fields. It is anticipated that this erosional rill drains surface water runoff from irrigation and seasonally from higher rainfall events. The proposed new culvert would convey runoff underneath the road prism, discharging to upland soils immediately upslope of a County road (Heritage Lane) where the erosional rill discharges into a drainage ditch on the north side of the County road. No increase of runoff is anticipated. No impacts to watercourses, floodplains, or fish are expected to result from the proposed project.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: No wetlands are present in the project area or immediately downstream of the proposed culvert. Therefore, the project would have no impacts to wetlands.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: Groundwater and aquifers would not be impacted by the proposed project as the project does not include any groundwater withdraws or aquifer recharge areas.

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



Explanation: No change in land use is proposed and no specially designated areas were identified within the project limits. The project would not result in changes or impacts to land use or specially designated areas.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: There are no residences within visual range of the work limits. The proposed project feature is consistent with existing roads. There would be no impacts to visual resources.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: The proposed project is expected to reduce dust generation and improve air quality along the rural access road by reducing erosion of the existing roadway. Minor vehicle emissions during

construction would be temporary in duration. There would be no impacts to air quality.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Temporary construction noise during daylight hours is expected. Construction is expected to last less than four weeks. The current level of road use is not expected to change and no operational noise increases are expected.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: The project would develop a site-specific health and safety plan to address any hazards during the proposed work. 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, if necessary:

- 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:

- 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:

**Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

The Access Road Engineer would contact adjacent and potentially affected landowners prior to project construction.

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

Signed: /s/ John Wiley  
John Wiley EP-4  
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: April 11, 2018