

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: FY18 Monroe-Custer Mile 50 Access Road Improvement Project

Project No.: 1718

Project Manager: Richard Ross

Location: Skagit County, Washington

Transmission Line/ROW	Structure #	Township	Range	Section	Ownership/Land Use
Monroe-Custer No. 1	50/3	35N	5E	21	Private/Rural Residential

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

Description of the Proposed Action: The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) plans to replace one existing bridge over Coal Creek and improve approximately 900 linear feet of access road for the Monroe-Custer No. 1 transmission line near tower 50/3 in Skagit County, Washington.

Access road work would include: replacing one existing bridge with new 60-foot-long by 20-foot-wide bridge; performing minor blading, shaping, grading, and adding rock (improvements) to approximately 900 feet of existing serviceable access road; and installing one gate. General equipment used for this type of project includes graders, rollers, excavators, and dump trucks.

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/ Chad Browning

Chad Browning

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: May 14, 2018

Attachment: 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.

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Project Site Description

Proposed maintenance activities are located in a segment of access road for the Monroe-Custer No. 1 transmission line near structure 50/3, which is near Sedro-Wooley, WA. Elevation (above mean sea level) within the project area ranges from approximately 20 to 30 meters. Vegetation in the project area primarily consists of grasses and shrubs, with taller riparian vegetation along the banks of Coal Creek. The project area is privately owned and includes natural land cover. Land use within the project area consists of utility line corridor right-of-way and includes dirt and gravel access roads, the existing Coal Creek bridge, and electrical lines overhead (wood and metal crossbar transmission towers exist outside of the project area). Adjacent land use primarily consists of agriculture, low density residential development, and natural open land.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The project area was surveyed by a BPA archaeologist and reviewed by Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). No cultural resources were identified during the survey. DAHP concurred with BPA's no adverse effect to historic properties determination on July 5, 2017.</p> <p>In the event any archaeological material is encountered during project activities, BPA would stop work in the vicinity and immediately notify the BPA environmental lead, archaeologist, and project manager; interested tribes; DAHP; and the appropriate local, state, and Federal agencies. BPA would implement reasonable measures to protect the discovery site, including any appropriate stabilization or covering and take reasonable steps to ensure the confidentiality of the discovery site, including restricting access.</p>		
2. Geology and Soils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Minimal soil disturbance would occur within the existing road prism and at the bridge replacement location. Erosion control measures would be used. Stabilization would include: roughening of soils, seeding with an appropriate native erosion control seed mix, using slow release fertilizer, and mulch. Coal Creek would be isolated and bypassed during construction to minimize turbidity.</p>		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Vegetation removal would be limited to those within the immediate road bed. No Federal or state special-status plant species are recorded in the project area. Any disturbed areas outside the road bed would be reseeded. Vehicles and equipment would be washed prior to entry into project area to prevent the spread of invasive plant species.</p>		

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



Explanation: No suitable habitat is present in the project area for listed wildlife species. Low-quality habitat typical of the area would be disturbed (0.4 acre).

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



Explanation: A bridge replacement is proposed over Coal Creek. Bull trout, Chinook salmon, and steelhead have the potential to occur in the vicinity of the proposed project. Construction below and in the vicinity of the ordinary high water mark (OHWM) of Coal Creek would only be conducted after temporary isolation and bypass measures have been installed and fish salvage has been completed. The proposed 60-foot bridge span has been designed to exceed 1.5x the average active channel width of 16 feet. In addition, the proposed construction would occur during the approved In-Water Work Window (July 1-October 1) to minimize impacts on fish species and would follow BPA's standard Temporary Diversion Details for Bridge Installation. An Erosion and Sediment Control Plan would be prepared and adhered to during construction. All disturbed areas would be restored post-project with native seed, and streambed gravels would be added within the disturbance footprint.

BPA received approval from the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) on December 1, 2017, for take coverage under BPA's Standard Local Operating Procedures Biological Opinion (BO) for impacts to Chinook, steelhead, and Essential Fish Habitat.

BPA has also received a BO from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for take coverage for bull trout on February 23, 2018.

Compliance with all terms and conditions of both BOs is required.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: There are no wetlands mapped within project area. No National Wetland Inventory wetlands or hydric soil units overlap the road maintenance footprint.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: Groundwater would not be affected by proposed road improvement activities; no new groundwater wells or use of groundwater proposed. Grading is not proposed below the elevation of the existing creek bed.

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



Explanation: No land use changes are proposed; no specially designated areas have been identified.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The new bridge would be similar to the existing bridge and would not change the visual quality of the area. Access roads would visually match existing roads.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Any fugitive dust or similar air quality impacts during project implementation are expected to be temporary and minimal.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Construction noise from typical utility line equipment would be temporary and localized.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: Project activities would not impact human health or safety. In fact, the proposed action would help 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, 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

Description: Notification letters would be sent by the BPA Realty Specialist to all landowners prior to work.

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

Signed: */s/ Chad Browning*

Chad Browning

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: *May 14, 2018*