

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Redmond District Access Road Maintenance

**Project No.:** 395566

**Project Manager:** Clint Stanton, Access Road Engineer – TFLF-TPP-3

**Location:** Deschutes and Crook Counties, Oregon

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

**Description of the Proposed Action:** BPA proposes to conduct routine maintenance, repair and improvements on the access roads along the Ponderosa-Pilot Butte, Redmond-Brasada, and Redmond-Pilot Butte transmission lines in BPA's Redmond District. The proposed work is necessary to repair existing road infrastructure and maintain roadway safety. The proposed project includes the following features:

- Existing access road improvements (45,940 linear feet);
- Existing access road reconstruction (7,416 linear feet);
- New road construction (498 linear feet)
- Two new construction landings (4,100 square feet total);
- Roadside clearing (19,833 lineal feet);
- 79 water bars;
- 8 drain dips;
- 11 replacement gates.

The project would involve the following actions: laying gravel, roadway improvements along 45,940 lineal feet, roadway reconstruction along 7,416 lineal feet, new roadway construction along 498 linear feet, installing 79 rock water bars, 8 drain dips, and 11 replacement gates. The roadway improvements would occur within the existing road prism aside from the 498 lineal feet of new road construction and the construction of two proposed new landings (4,100 sq. ft. combined). No in-water work would be conducted. The above described 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: *July 3, 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.

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### Project Site Description

Biologists from Otak, Inc. conducted a site visit on September 20-22, 2016 to evaluate site conditions and the surrounding environment. The proposed projects are located in the following areas:

- Ponderosa-Pilot Butte: Northeast of the City of Bend in rural Deschutes and Crook Counties, OR;
- Redmond-Brasada: Southeast of the City of Redmond in rural Deschutes and Crook Counties, OR;
- Redmond-Pilot Butte: South of the City of Redmond in rural Deschutes County, OR.

Land ownership within the project areas includes primarily bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands; and privately held property. A small portion of City of Redmond property and State of Oregon property are also crossed. Land use within the project vicinity includes open space, federal managed lands, cattle grazing, the BPA ROW and rural residential properties. The approximate site elevation is between 3,000 and 4,200 feet above sea level. The project is located in high desert sagebrush (*Artemesia spp*)/Western juniper (*Juniperus occidentalis*)/bunchgrass 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
<p><b>1. Historic and Cultural Resources</b></p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Archaeological Investigations Northwest, Inc. (AINW) conducted a cultural resource survey for a proposed access road improvement project along the Ponderosa-Pilot Butte, Redmond-Brasada, and Redmond-Pilot Butte transmission lines operated by BPA. AINW archaeologists conducted the archaeological pedestrian survey between July 24 and August 3, 2017. During the survey of Ponderosa-Pilot Butte No. 1 transmission line access road, two historic-period archaeological sites were identified and recorded in the APE. The two historic-period sites are refuse scatters found on the ground surface, outside of the access road prism.</p> <p>AINW’s report and BPA’s determination of effect letter was submitted to the consulting parties on May 7, 2018. BPA determined the projects would have No Adverse Effect to historic properties. No responses were received from the consulting parties (the Burns Paiute Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, the Oregon SHPO, and the Bureau of Land Management-Prineville District). The 30-day consultation period has elapsed therefore BPA has met its obligations under Section 106 of the NHPA and no further consultation/review is required for any of the access road maintenance as described and planned.</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>		
<p><b>2. Geology and Soils</b></p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Explanation: The project includes working within the existing road prism to improve drainage on the road surface

by reconstructing and improving the existing access road infrastructure by laying gravel, installing two rock water bars and installing a new landing site. The proposed roadway improvements would likely conserve soil resources by reducing ponding and soil erosion within the roadway. Any new ground disturbance, such as that associated with the proposed new landings, would be reseeded with a native seed mix immediately following construction to reduce soil erosion. The water bars or drain dips would not connect to other aquatic resources. No prime or unique farmlands would be affected. Therefore, the proposed action would have limited impacts to geology and soils.

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



Explanation: The proposed project occurs in rural Deschutes and Crook County, OR high elevation Western juniper/sagebrush habitat east of the Cascade Range. Rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*), native bunchgrass, cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) and various native and invasive forbs are also dominant in this widespread plant community type typical of the region. Sparse vegetation has established within the roadway in some areas and would be cleared from the road prism where roadwork is proposed. Some juniper trees may be removed within the areas proposed for new landings, however, smaller aged junipers are considered to be overabundant in vegetation communities within Eastern Oregon.

No federally-listed or proposed listed plant species or their designated critical habitats under jurisdiction of the USFWS are documented to occur or have the potential to occur in the region, and no suitable habitat for special-status plant species were found to occur within the project area. A Letter of No Effect has been completed to document compliance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and has been submitted under separate cover to BPA.

Therefore, the proposed action would have no effect on special-status plant species and limited impacts to other native and non-native vegetation that have overgrown within the roadway or that are located within the areas of the proposed landings.

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



Explanation: An official federally-listed species list was requested from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Information, Planning and Conservation database (IPaC) on January 18, 2018 (updated). Two federally-listed or proposed listed wildlife species or their designated critical habitats under jurisdiction of the USFWS are documented to occur or have the potential to occur in the region and include the gray wolf (*Canis lupis*) and the yellow-billed cuckoo (*Coccyzus americanus*), however, no suitable habitat for these or other special-status wildlife species was found to occur within the project area. The proposed project actions would occur primarily within the existing road prism and any impacts to non-listed wildlife species would be temporary in nature and limited to construction within the road prism and 4,100 square feet of the two proposed landings. 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: A number of seasonal and constructed water bodies are located within the project area, including Dry River, Shumway Lake, North Unit Main Canal, as well as various unnamed ponds, artificial flow paths, seasonal streams, perennial streams and rivers, and unnamed canals and ditches. No work is proposed within these waterbodies, however, some road work is proposed near artificial canals and natural drainages. Construction BMPs would be taken to prevent impacts such as roadway fill/debris from entering these waterways. Several erosional rills have developed on the existing access road, but they do not drain to other aquatic resources outside of the road prism.

The work as proposed is exempt from Corps Section 404 and DSL permit applications. No federally-listed or proposed listed aquatic species or their designated critical habitats under jurisdiction of the NMFS or USFWS are documented to occur or have the potential to occur within the project area and no suitable habitat for special-status aquatic species was found to occur within the project area. The project area is not within range of any

species or designate critical habitat under jurisdiction of the NMFS or the USFWS. Therefore, the project would have no effect to waterbodies, floodplains, or fish.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: Narrow wetlands associated with irrigation ditches and seasonal streams/waterways are located adjacent to proposed work areas. BMPs would be put into place to avoid any unintentional impacts to wetlands. No wetlands are within areas proposed for construction. Therefore, the proposed action 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. The proposed work is limited to shallow soils and previously disturbed areas. There would be no impacts to groundwater or aquifers.

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

Explanation: No change in land use is proposed as part of the project. 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 limited 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 access road by covering exposed soils with a gravel surface layer. Minor vehicle emissions during construction would be temporary in duration.

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. Project activities 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:

- 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:

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

The Access Road Engineer will 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: July 3, 2018