

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Chief Joseph-Monroe No. 1 Line access road test section

Project No. (if applicable): 2,645

Project Manager: Jim Semrau, TEP-TPP-1

Location: Chelan County, Washington / BPA Wenatchee 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 install rock on a short test section of existing access road in a multi-line, shared right-of-way (ROW) corridor on line mile 79 of the Chief Joseph-Monroe No. 1 500-kilovolt transmission line. The project involves placing aggregate into a roadbed support material, called a cellular confinement system, on top of approximately 1,200 feet of existing gravel access road. BPA will assess the condition of this section in the spring, after seasonal snow melt, which will improve access road design for future access road maintenance projects along much of this corridor. All of the proposed work will occur on an existing road prism and no new access roads, excavation or other improvements are required.

BPA transmission line access roads provide necessary access to the ROW corridor and within the ROW between structures. The proposed project area is in sub-alpine terrain along Highway 2 immediately south of the Stevens Pass Ski Resort in the Cascade mountain range. The cleared, shared ROW corridor includes three separate transmission lines and traverses relatively steep, rocky slopes in the Wenatchee National Forest.

The proposed action will help refine and improve designs for future access road maintenance. Access roads must be maintained to ensure ongoing safe and reliable operation of the transmission lines to minimize risk of outages and maintain power delivery in the region. The proposed work is scheduled to occur in October-November 2014, weather permitting. If work cannot be completed this year due to weather or other constraints, then the proposed action will be implemented in 2015 within the allowed work window, September to November. All maintenance work will be performed in accordance with BPA access road standards.

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/ Makary A. Hutson

Makary A. Hutson

Biologist/Environmental Scientist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason

Stacy L. Mason

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: November 5, 2014

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: Chief Joseph-Monroe No.1 Line access road test section

Project Site Description

BPA proposes to add road aggregate on a short test section of existing access road in a multi-line, shared right-of-way corridor on line mile 79 of the Chief Joseph-Monroe No.1 500-kilovolt transmission line. The project involves placing aggregate into a roadbed support material, called a cellular confinement system, on top of approximately 1,200-feet of existing access road bed prism. No new access roads or disturbance areas are proposed as part of this activity.

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 scope of the proposed undertaking is limited to adding rock and fabric on top of an existing access road in an active, cleared, shared transmission line corridor. According to the scope of the proposed action, the activity is not a type that would result in changes in the character or use of historic properties, if any such historic properties are located in the area of potential effects. The work is an access road maintenance-related action necessary to preserve existing infrastructure, maintain roadway safety, and manage stormwater run-off. Inadvertent discovery form should be provided and explained to the construction contractor staff.</p>		
2. Geology and Soils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The proposed work is intended to improve access road stability and decrease potential for annual erosion. If the test section of access road does not meet or exceed BPA road standards, i.e. significant erosion and road failure is observed, BPA should implement remedial actions including, but not limited to, stabilization or full removal of material added in this section of access road.</p>		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The proposed work must use existing access roads and landing in the existing, cleared transmission line ROW. No off-access road driving, staging, or landing or road improvements shall occur during this work.</p>		
4. Wildlife (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> This stretch of transmission corridor is located in designated Critical Habitat for the northern Spotted Owl (NSO). No off-ROW clearing is allowed. Work is scheduled between 10/22/14 and 11/30/14, after the NSO late breeding season. The closest NSO management circle boundary is greater than 1.5 miles from site.</p>		

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



Explanation: The proposed work is in an upland area and is intended to improve access road stability, which will decrease potential for any sediment releases from erosion reaching waters downslope.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: The proposed work is in an upland area and is intended to improve access road stability, which will decrease potential for any sediment releases to any potential wetlands downslope.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: The proposed work is in an upland area.

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



Explanation: Maintenance on existing access road will not alter or effect land use in area.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: Maintenance on existing access road will not significantly alter or effect visual quality.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: The proposed work is intended to improve access road stability, which may positively affect air quality. Any fugitive dust or similar during project implementation is expected to be temporary and insignificant.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Construction noise will be temporary and localized.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: Maintenance on existing access road will not significantly 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.

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

- 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.

- 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.

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: BPA realty coordinated with and received concurrence for proposed maintenance-related activities with the landowner, the Wenatchee National Forest.

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

Signed: /s/ Makary A. Hutson
Makary A. Hutson, KEPR-4

Date: October 30, 2014