

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: St. Clair-South Tacoma #1 230-kV Impairment Corrections

PP&A No.: 4202

Project Manager: Cynthia Rounds, TEP-TPP-1

Location: Thurston and Pierce Counties, WA

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

Description of the Proposed Action: The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to correct two areas along the St. Clair-South Tacoma transmission line where the ground to conductor or foreign utility to conductor distance has been determined to be insufficient with current electrical safety standards, referred to as impairments. These corrections would be made by excavating approximately 200 cubic yards of fill between Structures 6/2 and 6/3 that has been shaped into a motorcycle jump (Impairment #1) and building H-frame prop structure between Structures 23/4 and 23/5 (Impairment #2).

Excavating the fill at Impairment #1 would be accomplished using a front end loader, excavator, and dump trucks. Installing the H-frame prop structures at Impairment #2 would be accomplished with cranes, man lifts, boom trucks, line trucks, and pulling/tensioning equipment. A combination of cranes and boom trucks (pole or bucket) may be used to facilitate the work.

The H-frame prop structure would be located approximately 665 feet ahead on line (AOL) from the existing Structure 23/4. The H-frame prop structure would consist of two Class H1 wood poles and a metal cross arm. No guy wires would be required. Once installed, the line crew would move the structures AOL and back on line (BOL) to remove conductor and retention of the conductor. Each work area would be brushed ahead of time to allow equipment to safely setup. No landings would be created or improved for this project.

Transmission Line	Structure(s)	Township	Range	Section	Land Use
St. Clair-South Tacoma No. 1	6/3	17N	1E	13	BPA Fee-Owned
St. Clair-South Tacoma No. 1	23/5	19N	3E	36	BPA Fee-Owned

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/ Jonnel Deacon
Jonnel Deacon - EPR-4
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel
Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: June 14, 2019

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

The Impairment #1 work area is located within a grassy field. The area is level (aside from a constructed motorcycle track). The Impairment #2 work area is located within a grassy field and is level.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Background research by the two previous archaeologists concluded in their determination that the areas had been previously surveyed and the proposed action had no potential to affect historic properties. If resources are discovered during construction activities, work would cease and the appropriate archaeological resources (BPA and WA DAHP) would be contacted.</p>		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Sites would be stabilized upon completion of project activities. Work would occur during the summer and fall months. Stormwater BMPs would be used as needed during the project to protect the surrounding area from runoff and erosion issues.</p>		
3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitat)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Work would occur in areas maintained as an open transmission line corridor. No special-status species are present. A survey conducted on 09/27/2018 and 09/28/2018 by BPA employees confirmed this.</p>		
4. Wildlife (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Both work areas are potential suitable habitat for the Mazama pocket gopher. A survey conducted on 9/28/2018 by BPA and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) confirmed the presence of the Yelm subspecies of the Mazama pocket gopher in an adjacent field to Impairment #1. No Roy Prairie subspecies of the Mazama pocket gophers were located at Impairment #2. Because the project may affect the Mazama pocket gopher, formal consultation was initiated with USFWS. It was determined that the project is likely to adversely affect the Yelm subspecies of the Mazama pocket gopher and is not likely to adversely affect the Roy Prairie subspecies of the Mazama pocket gopher (MPG). USFWS agreed with these determinations in a Biological Opinion (01EWF00-2019-F-0155) dated 05/15/2019. Mitigation measures for when correcting Impairment #1 include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work would not begin until July 1. • Work requiring the use of heavy equipment would be scheduled when soil moisture content falls in a 		

favorable range, freeze-thaw conditions can be avoided, and damage in the form of soil rutting and compaction are minimized.

- Crews would avoid operating heavy equipment on occupied MPG habitat, and would minimize passes over occupied habitat, to the fullest extent practicable.
- Disturbed areas would be seeded with a mix of grasses and/or forbs which compliments the species immediately adjacent to the affected area. Where the affected areas contain mostly or exclusively nonnative pasture grasses, they would be seeded with a conventional, nonnative (but non-invasive), herbaceous mix.

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



Explanation: No water bodies or floodplains occur at or within the area of influence of the worksites and there would be no in-water work required. Appropriate stormwater BMPs would be used during the project as needed to control runoff or erosion. Work areas would be stabilized upon completion of project activities and reseeded. A no effect determination addressing ESA-listed aquatic species and essential fish habitat was completed for the project.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: No wetlands occur at or within the area of influence of the work sites.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: Project activities do not have the potential to impact groundwater or aquifers, including public and private water wells or springs. Any spills would be addressed immediately and follow BPA protocol for cleanup and regulatory notifications.

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



Explanation: The project locations are within existing transmission line rights-of-way and would not change existing land uses. Project locations do not include any specially-designated areas.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The motorcycle jump would be removed, creating a field that is similar to the surrounding area. The current landowner is looking forward to the change. Three new H-frame wood pole prop structures would also be installed in an existing transmission line corridor. The overall visual change would be consistent with the existing transmission line use in the area.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: The project has a short duration and involves normal construction equipment activities. A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions is expected due to construction.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Noise disturbance would be limited to general construction equipment activities, would be for a short duration, and would occur during daylight hours.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: No known hazardous conditions are known. Completion of this project would increase system stability and reliability to the service area as well as correct the current impairments.

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: BPA has coordinated with the current landowners where the two impairments exist. Both have been notified and are aware of the proposed project and schedule.

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

Signed: */s/ Jonnel Deacon*
Jonnel Deacon – EPR-4
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: *June 14, 2019*