

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Chief Joseph -Snohomish No. 3 and No. 4 Transmission Line Insulator Replacement.

PP&A No.: 4415

Project Manager: Brent Thompson - TFWF-SCHULTZ

Location: Chelan County, WA

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

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to replace the dead end tower insulators on both Chief Joseph – Snohomish No.3 and No. 4 transmission lines. Transmission line insulator replacement would be necessary in order to replace failing insulators and associated hardware before they become a further hazard with a potential to cause a fire. The project would span approximately 5 ½ miles from structure 41/1 to structure 45/1. The work would occur in Chelan County, Washington. The proposed project crosses through the Okanogan – Wenatchee National Forest, Bureau of Land Management – managed lands, and private lands.

BPA determined insulators and hardware located along dead end towers are at imminent risk of structural failure and arcing and would require emergency replacement. To replace the insulators, linemen would access towers and disconnect the failing insulators and hardware. Helicopters would then take away the old insulators and bring in new ones. The project would utilize low ground pressure ATV, material handler, dump truck, trailer, helicopter mechanic truck, firefighting water truck/trailer, helicopters, and several helicopter landing zones. A small amount of brush clearing may be required for helicopter fly yards. No ground disturbing activities are anticipated and existing access roads would be used whenever possible to minimize impacts. If boulder or other debris are present in the access roads, they may be relocated to the road shoulder to allow for vehicle access.

BPA would have multiple crews conducting the work during the period when the line is de-energized.

The proposed action would maintain reliable power to the region. All work would be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA 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, Jul. 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/ Adrienne Wojtasz
Adrienne Wojtasz
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange
Katey Grange
NEPA Compliance Office

Date: May 22, 2020

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 -Snohomish No. 3 and No. 4 Transmission Line Insulator Replacement.

Project Site Description

The proposed project area occurs in central Washington and is located adjacent to predominantly secondary growth forested lands. Proposed maintenance activities would be performed in the existing transmission line right-of ways, access road easements and three adjacent helicopter landing zones which are located on privately owned lands in addition to lands managed by the Okanogan – Wenatchee Forest, and US Bureau of Land Management.

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> BPA Historian and Archeologist reviewed proposed activities and determined that these types of activities do not have the potential to cause effects to historic properties or determined that these types of activities are covered under an existing Section 106 consultation.</p> <p>The Chief Joseph-Snohomish No. 3 transmission line was energized on September 9, 1955 and the Chief Joseph-Snohomish No. 4 transmission line was energized on May 12, 1965. Both lines are eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing segments to the Multiple Property Documentation for the Bonneville Power Administration Pacific Northwest Transmission System (Kramer 2012), however the proposed project activities to replace the hardware (including insulators) on both lines at dead end towers 41/1, 41/2, 42/3, 43/6, 44/3, and 45/1 would have no potential to cause effect. Under specific integrity issues for Design/Materials/Workmanship, the MPD references that normal, in-kind, repair work, such as the replacement of footings, replacement of conductors, insulators, spacers, guy wires, cross-arms etc. is considered normal maintenance that is part of functionality and does not affect integrity (Kramer, 2012, pg. 47).</p> <p>As no ground disturbance would occur as a result of this undertaking, and minor additive features would not adversely impact the integrity of historic transmission infrastructure, BPA has determined that this undertaking has No Potential to Effect historic properties.</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; Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> No ground disturbance is anticipated.</p>		

3. **Plants** (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)



Explanation: No known Federal/state special-status plants are present in the project area. If necessary vegetation would be crushed and left in place.

In addition, on National Forest System lands managed by the Okanogan – Wenatchee National Forest, BPA would comply with the *Standard Operating Procedures for limiting the spread of invasive species and fire prevention as directed in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA)*.

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



Explanation: In general, the project would have minimal impacts to local wildlife and habitat related to temporary disturbance associated with elevated noise and human presence. The project would have no impacts to Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed species or state sensitive species categorized as “Critically Imperiled” or “Imperiled”.

Note: The following minimization measures would be implemented to minimize impacts to wildlife and their habitat.

- Drive on existing access roads.
- Reduce work area footprint to the least necessary to safely do the work.
- Crush vegetation in place of removal.

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



Explanation: No in-water work is proposed for this project and the project would not result in ground disturbance that would produce sediment that could enter any nearby waterbodies. Therefore, water bodies, floodplains, and fish would not be affected by the proposed project activities.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: No ground disturbing activities are anticipated in wetlands that occur along the project.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: No impacts to ground water or aquifers are anticipated due to the lack of ground disturbance.

Note: The following minimization measures will be implemented to minimize groundwater contamination potential.

- Appropriately stocked spill response kits would be located on vehicles, other equipment, and fly yards used on this project.

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



Explanation: No change in land use would occur and project activities would not impact existing land uses.

For those portions of the project crossing the Okanogan – Wenatchee National Forest, the *Memorandum of Understanding between the Bonneville Power Administration United States Department of Energy and the United States Forest Service United States Department of Agriculture Regarding Transmission Facilities and Access to Those Facilities on National Forest System Lands Standard Operation Procedures* listed below would be implemented:

- **Section V** Transmission Facilities
- **Section X** Fire control communication and coordination
- **Appendix E** Fire Prevention and Suppression

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The project would have minimal impact to visual quality. The existing glass insulators would be changed from two rows to one row of brown glazed porcelain insulators, which is consistent with other insulators along the transmission line.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: The project would have a temporary impact on air quality from a small amount of vehicle emissions and dust generated during construction.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Some temporary construction noise from construction and helicopter use would occur during daylight hours. The operational noise of the transmission line would not change.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: The proposed action would allow safe and timely access to the transmission line which 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: BPA Realty personnel and environmental specialist have coordinated the proposed project activities with the Okanogan – Wenatchee National Forest, Bureau of Land Management and private landowners and any concerns regarding proposed transmission line maintenance activities have been addressed.

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

Signed: /s/ Adrienne Wojtasz
Adrienne Wojtasz, EPR-Bell-1
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: May 22, 2020