

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: King County Weyerhaeuser Road Improvements

Project No.: LURR 20190304

Project Manager: Patrick Munyua – TERR Covington; Michelle Doiron – TERR Snohomish

Location: King County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance; B1.24 Property Transfers.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow the Weyerhaeuser Company temporary access and permission to conduct access road improvements on BPA fee-owned land located in King County, Washington. Temporary use would include the entire approximate 1-mile-long section of BPA fee-owned access road from US highway 2 to BPA's Chief Joseph-Monroe No 1 500-kV transmission line corridor. Weyerhaeuser would use the access road to support their "Ticket to Ride" logging operation. The proposed access route would be the sole viable option to access the Weyerhaeuser timber parcel located west of BPA's fee-owned road route and lands owned by the US Forest Service. Additionally, Weyerhaeuser would conduct road maintenance on approximately 1,000 feet of the existing access route to improve travel conditions. The road section that would be improved is the section that provides access to structure 83/3 on the Chief Joseph-Monroe No. 1 500-kV transmission line from the turnaround and parking area associated with the US Forest Service Surprise Creek trailhead.

Road maintenance would include the light grading of the access route back to a level state and adding approximately 3 inches of new gravel on the surface. Additionally, Weyerhaeuser would improve the drainage along the access route by installing four drain dips along the route, grade one small berm (less than one foot tall) located near the most northern portion of the access route, replace one existing 18-inch-diameter cross drain culvert with a new 36-inch-diameter culvert and install two new 36-inch-diameter cross drain culverts between the existing culvert location and the road turnaround near the US Forest Service trailhead to the south. Also, two large rip-rap jersey barriers would be installed near the structure footings on 83/3 on the Chief Joseph-Monroe No. 1 and 83/3 of the Chief Joseph-Snohomish No. 3 and No. 4 transmission line structures. The rip-rap barriers would be needed in order to serve as erosion control mitigations for structural stability. The equipment to be used would be a grader, dump truck, and an excavator.

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/ Nicholas Johnson
Nicholas Johnson
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

<u>/s/ Katey C. Grange</u>	<u>August 11, 2021</u>
Katey C. Grange	Date
NEPA Compliance Officer	

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: King County Weyerhaeuser Road Improvements

Project Site Description

The project area is located within King County in the state of Washington, Township 26 N, Range 13 E, and Sections 29 and 32. The BPA fee-owned access route is a gravel road which provides access from US Highway 2 to the Chief Joseph – Monroe No. 1 500 kV transmission line structure 83/3. The current road varies in grade from relatively flat to steep as it transitions along the terrain south of the highway. US Forrest Service Mt Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest manages the lands directly surrounding the BPA fee-owned road route. The current access road past the US Forest Service trailhead up to the BPA transmission rights-of-way corridor is in poor condition. The surrounding lands are typical coniferous forests of northern Washington. The nearest waterbody is about 0.5 mile from the work area and there are no wetlands in or near the project area.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and the Washington Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation (DHAP) on March 18, 2021. DHAP provided concurrence with the Area of Potential Effect (APE) via a letter dated March 18, 2021. BPA sent a no effect to historic resources determination on June 16, 2021, and DHAP concurred on July 16, 2021. In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA would require that work be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA and in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities would not require or include the construction of new access routes or landings. The repair and enhancement of the current drainage features would reduce future erosion and would be contained within the previously disturbed established road prism. The proposed two new culverts would provide increased drainage capacity while reducing future erosion and would be located within the existing road prism.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No known special-status plants are located within the project area. Some vegetation may be disturbed near the road path during construction. Areas disturbed would be re-seeded with a native seed mix post road improvements.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project area is located within potential suitable habitat for both Marbled Murrelet and Northern Spotted Owl associated with the US Forest Service lands, which surround the entire project area. Project activities would be anticipated to occur within the late breeding and nesting period of the NSO. Potential effects on both listed bird species would be from noise disturbance due to the equipment used for road maintenance activities and the need to conduct these activities within the breeding seasons due to weather conditions preventing crews from safely accessing the site during the late fall throughout early spring. The US Forest Service concurred on July 15, 2021, that the proposed project activities would be covered under their programmatic Section 7 consultation with the USFWS dated June 2020. Local wildlife could be disrupted during the short construction window and during the use of the road by Weyerhaeuser post project competition. Traffic on the road would increase, but would be relatively short during the timber harvest period of two months.

Notes:

- No trees were identified for removal. The proposed activities would not remove, modify, downgrade, or remove suitable habitat or dispersal habitat for listed species and would not result in a change in open road density.
- The Weyerhaeuser Company would make all the appropriate notifications and adhere to best management practices, conservation measures, and terms and conditions outlined in the US Forest Service programmatic consultation.
- The US Forest Service would ensure that all required notifications are made to the USFWS per their programmatic consultation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project actions would not impact water resources or water quality associated with the intermittent creek located 0.5 mile northwest of the project location.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are known to occur within the project location.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed actions would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed project would not change the current land use or impact specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed project would not alter the current viewscape or change the current visual quality of the area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Dust creation would be associated with proposed construction activities. Project timeline would be short in duration and would be confined to relatively small area. No other activities would impact air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Associated construction noise would be generated during road improvement work and vehicle use during timber hauling. Noise generation would be in short durations with the road improvements construction lasting 2-3 days and intermittent for timber hauling activities.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction crews would follow all pertinent safety regulations and would conduct daily safety briefings while operating heavy machinery near energized transmission infrastructure.

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: N/A

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

Explanation: N/A

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: N/A

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: N/A

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: The US Forrest Service owns and manages the lands directly surrounding the fee owned road route and is also a cooperating partner with the proposed project. The Weyerhaeuser Company would make all appropriate notifications and coordination with the Mt Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest ranger district as needed. No other landowner notifications would be needed for the proposed project.

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

Signed: /s/ Nicholas Johnson August 11, 2021
Nicholas Johnson, ECT-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist