

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Grand Coulee – Okanogan No.2 Cold Springs Fire Access Road Remediation

Project No.: 4657

Project Manager: Meadow Nelson – TEPL-TPP-1

Location: Okanogan, 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 perform road stabilization work on approximately 14.5 miles of access roads between miles 25 and 39 that were used during the Cold Springs Fire emergency work on the Colville Reservation. The proposed work would include blading, shaping, grading, seeding and placing surface rock on new and existing road prisms to ensure safe access to structures. In addition, the proposed work would include stabilizing transmission tower landings and sloped areas utilizing cut and fill techniques. General equipment used would include graders, bull-dozers, excavators, and dump trucks. The proposed action would reduce the risk of an access road washout and environmental contamination due to runoff and slope instability. Additionally, the proposed project would allow safe and timely access to the transmission lines which would reduce outage times and maintain reliable power in the region.

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 C. Grange
Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: June 17, 2021

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 project area is confined to the areas immediately adjacent to GCOU-OKAN No. 2 miles 25 to 39 listed in Table below. The project is predominantly shrub-steppe, dry grassland characterized by shrubs such as sagebrush, greasewood, and bitterbrush, and grasses such as bluebunch wheatgrass located in Okanogan County, Washington the BPA Wenatchee district.

Proposed maintenance activity would be performed in the existing transmission line access roads on the Colville Reservation.

| Township | Range | Section |
|-----------------|--------------|----------------|
| 31N | 27E | 02, 11-14 |
| 32N | 27E | 6-8, 16-17 |
| 33N | 26E | 14, 23-25 |
| 33N | 27E | 31 |

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and the Colville Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) on May 21, 2020. THPO provided concurrence with the Area of Potential Effect (APE) via a letter dated April 29, 2021. BPA sent a no effect to historic resources determination on June 15, 2021, and THPO concurred on June 15, 2021.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The planned road improvements would occur on pre-existing, established road footprint. Staging areas and turn-around zones for construction activity would be established in previously disturbed areas. Any disturbed soils incidental to construction would be stabilized with native seed and weed-free straw or other acceptable erosion and sediment control measures.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minimal disturbance to vegetation is anticipated. There would be no effect to ESA-listed plant species impacted. No impacts to state or federally sensitive species are anticipated. Project activities would be limited to the already impacted access road right-of-way and would not substantially alter existing plant communities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In general, the project would have a small impact to wildlife and habitat related to temporary disturbance associated with elevated equipment noise and human presence. The project would have no impacts to state or federally listed sensitive species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is not located within a floodplain and there are no nearby water bodies that support resident, anadromous, or ESA-listed fish. Erosion control best management practices would be used to ensure sedimentation into any water body does not occur.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are within the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No use of groundwater proposed. Maximum depth of disturbance would be about 2 feet below ground surface.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use. No specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be performed within existing transmission line access road right-of-ways and consistent with the current appearance.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be temporary construction noise. Operational noise of the transmission line would not change.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

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: 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: BPA Realty personnel and environmental specialist have coordinated the proposed project activities with the landowners prior to project initiation 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: June 17, 2021