

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Horse Ranch Tap to Monroe-Snohomish Priority Pole Replacement Project

**PP&A No.:** 4488

**Project Manager:** Andrew Young

**Location:** Snohomish County, WA

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

**Description of the Proposed Action:** The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to replace three deteriorating wood pole structures along the Horse Ranch Tap to Monroe-Snohomish 115 kV (kilovolts) transmission line. Replacement would be in-kind to minimize ground disturbance. New landing construction or access road development is not planned at these locations.

**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/ Chad Browning*

Chad Browning

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

*/s/ Sarah T. Biegel*

Sarah T. Biegel Date: July 13, 2023

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:** Horse Ranch Tap to Monroe-Snohomish Priority Pole Replacement Project

## **Project Site Description**

BPA proposes to replace deteriorating wood poles and associated structural/electrical components (e.g. cross arms, insulators, guy anchors, etc.) at three structure locations within the Horse Ranch Tap to Monroe-Snohomish transmission line in Snohomish County, WA. Replacement would be in-kind and would be placed in the immediate vicinity of the original structure. An auger would be used to excavate a new hole prior to new wood pole placement. New landing construction or access road development is not planned at these locations.

## **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with Snohomish County, Puget Sound Energy, Seattle City Light, the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians, the Tulalip Tribes, and the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) on December 13, 2022, and received concurrence on the delineated APE from DAHP on the same date. On December 15, 2022, the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians noted that this project is in a culturally sensitive area and recommended that an archaeologist meeting the Secretary of the Interior Standards be present during ground disturbance. On February 8, 2023, Seattle City Light stated that they were in the process of writing a response to BPA. No other comments were received. BPA sent a no effect to historic properties determination on June 13, 2023. No responses were received within 30 days.

Notes:

- Implement inadvertent discovery protocols in the unlikely event that cultural material is 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: Localized soil disturbance would occur during wood-pole replacements. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized as necessary.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal or State special-status plant species are recorded in the project area. Project activities would be limited to within the existing managed transmission line right-of-way and associated access roads. No new landings or roads would be constructed.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area does not include habitat for any Federal or State special-status species. There would be no effect to ESA-listed species in the area. Project activities would be limited to within the existing managed transmission line right-of-way and associated access roads. Proposed work would not substantially alter the footprint or operational noise of the line; therefore, wildlife and associated habitat would not be permanently affected.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions.

Explanation: No in-water work is proposed for this project. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized to ensure sediment and other contaminants do not enter bodies of water; therefore, water bodies, floodplains, and fish would not be affected by the proposed project activities.

#### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: No wetlands within or near the project area.

#### **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Project would adhere to appropriate best management practices to prevent impacts to groundwater.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: No specially-designated areas were identified within the project area. Land use would not change as a result of project activities.

#### **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: No impacts to visual quality. New structures would be consistent and in general vicinity of existing structures.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No.

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

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Some temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: The proposed action would help reduce outage times and maintain reliable power to 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: Notifications via mailed letters would be sent to all current landowners approximately 3-8 weeks prior to project initiation. The letters provide BPA contact information to allow feedback from landowners/managers concerning 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/ Chad Browning

Chad Browning

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: July 13, 2023