

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** 2024 Expedited Priority Poles Traditional Method Replacements Phase 2

**Project No.:** 5017

**Project Manager:** Amanda Williams, TEPL-TPP-1

**Location:** Gallatin County, Montana and Benton County, Washington

**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) is proposing to replace deteriorating wood pole structures and associated hardware and guy wires at specific locations in multiple BPA districts. The structures proposed for replacement are listed below in Table 1. The work would include removing the existing wood pole structures (and guy wires if present) and replacing them in or adjacent to the existing location. Trucks and equipment would be staged in work areas about 50 feet by 50 feet at each of the structure replacement locations. Existing access roads would be used to access the work areas but landing improvements, such as minor leveling or grading, may occur. No helicopter use would be required. Fire wraps would also be added where appropriate. Fire wraps would be black and extend about 12 to 24 feet up the poles.

The proposed action would maintain reliable power in the region. All work would be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA standards.

Table 1. List of proposed structures to be replaced.

Maintenance Headquarters	Line Name	Mile	Structure
Idaho Falls	Macks Inn-Madison No 1	14	6
Pasco	Franklin-Badger Canyon No 2	13	7
Pasco	Badger Canyon-Richland No 1	5	6

**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/ Jonnel Deacon*

Jonnel Deacon

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

*/s/ Katey Grange*

Katey Grange

NEPA Compliance Officers      Date: July 1, 2024

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:** 2024 Expedited Priority Poles Traditional Method Replacements Phase 2

## **Project Site Description**

The two Pasco district structures are in an urban residential housing area. The Idaho Falls structure is in the Custer-Gallatin National Forest on flat, forested land.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation and made a determination of no adverse effect to historic properties pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act on March 18, 2024 for the project location in Montana. Letters were sent to the Crow Tribe of Indians, Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho Tribes, and the Montana State Historic Preservation Office. No comments were received.

BPA initiated consultation and made a determination of no adverse effect to historic properties pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act May 15, 2024 for the project locations in Washington. Letters were sent to the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakima Nation, and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. No responses from consulting parties were received.

Notes: In the event any archaeological material is encountered during project activities, stop work in the vicinity and immediately notify the BPA environmental lead, archaeologist, and project manager.

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Localized soil disturbance would occur during wood pole replacement and landing improvement. 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: Minimal or no disturbance to vegetation is anticipated during structure replacements and landing improvements. There would be no effect to ESA-listed plant species. No

impacts to state or federally sensitive species are anticipated. Project activities would be limited to the already impacted access road and transmission line 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 with conditions

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. Grizzly Bears are documented to occur near the project location in Montana. Project activities would occur during daylight hours, project members would follow applicable food storage requirements, overnight camping would not be allowed, and BPA personnel performing activities away from their vehicles would be instructed to carry bear spray and be trained in its proper use. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service agreed with a not likely to adversely affect determination dated 5/20/2024 (FWS/R1/ES/IFWO/2024-0083279).

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Erosion control best management practices combined with the distance to the nearest waterbody (0.4 miles) would ensure that sedimentation would not enter into any water body.

#### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are documented 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 12 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 right-of-way. Replacement of the wood pole and associated components would be in kind and replaced in the same location. The fire wraps would be black, which would be similar in appearance as the dark brown poles. Therefore, there would be a minimal change to the visual quality of the area.

## 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 has coordinated with the underlying land managers and private land owners for this work.

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

Signed: /s/ Jonnel Deacon  
Physical Scientist (Environment)  
EPR-Olympia

Date: July 1, 2024