

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Northwest Pipeline Installation at North Bonneville-Midway No.1 Transmission Line Right-of-Way

**Project No.:** LURR 2024-0053

**Project Manager:** Ryan Tanner, TERR-3

**Location:** Skamania County, WA

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow Northwest Pipeline to remove and replace the existing natural gas pipeline within BPA's fee-owned rights-of-way located in Skamania County, WA. The pipeline is located within BPA's fee-owned rights-of-way between structures 5/1 and 4/6 of the North Bonneville Midway No. 1 line and 4/6 and 4/7 of the Underwood Tap-Bonneville Alcoa No. 2 line. Project actions would include the removal of an existing 24-inch-diameter natural gas pipeline and the installation of a new 26-inch-diameter natural gas pipeline. Further, Northwest Pipeline would use current BPA access roads adjacent to the proposed construction area.

The removal of the existing 24-inch-diameter pipeline and installation of the new 26-inch-diameter pipeline would occur within the Northwest Pipeline's existing easement located within BPA's fee-owned rights-of-way. The proposed action would require trenching, grading, and compacting soils within the existing 55-foot-wide Northwest Pipeline easement. The proposed upgrades to the Northwest Pipeline would involve an approximately 300-foot-long (5-foot-wide by 4-foot-deep) trench running northwest-southeast to remove the existing pipeline and install the new pipeline across BPA's rights-of-way. These upgrades would require a temporary open trench, storage of excavated soils, and access work area and would be limited to within the existing Northwest Pipeline easement.

BPA access roads would be used by Northwest Pipeline to access and supply needed materials and equipment during the construction period. Once construction is completed BPA access roads would be restored to pre-construction conditions by Northwest Pipeline. There would be no staging of materials and equipment on BPA fee-owned rights-of-way.

Construction equipment would consist of light duty trucks, tractor trailer, water truck, side-boom-pipelayer, bulldozer, UTV Utility Terrain Vehicle, excavator, welding machinery, and powered hand tools.

**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.

Sylas Daughtrey  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange  
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:** Northwest Pipeline Installation at North Bonneville-Midway No.1 Transmission Line Right-of-Way

## **Project Site Description**

The project site is located on BPA fee-owned rights-of-way in Skamania County, WA. on the North Bonneville Midway No. 1 and Underwood Tap-Bonneville Alcoa No. 2 lines (Township 3 North, Range 7 East, Section 35; Township 2 North, Range 7 East, Section 3; Township 2 North, Range 7 East, DC 44). The general construction area consists of multiple compacted access roads, as well as vegetated and non-vegetated with common native and non-native grasses, shrubs, and trees. No wetlands or surface water are present within or near the project site. Areas surrounding the project site primarily consist of low density private residential properties, the Skamania golf course and resort, young and mature timber stands, U.S. Forest Service-managed land, and is located approximately 1 mile northwest of the Columbia River. The project area is located within the Urban land use designation of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA).

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

**Explanation:** BPA conducted a desktop review and subsurface field surveys of the Area of Potential Effects (APE). No historic or cultural resources were identified within the APE. On May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024, BPA initiated National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 consultation with the following parties:

- Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP)
- U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Nez Perce Tribe
- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon

On behalf of Northwest Pipeline, Willamette Cultural Resource Associates (WCRA) conducted background research utilizing DAHP's WISAARD database followed by an intensive field survey of the APE. Background research conducted by WCRA indicated that at least 38 previous archaeological surveys have been conducted within one mile of the project APE, three of which included parts of the APE. However, none of these surveys identified any cultural resources within the APE. As a result of three archaeological field surveys, which included the excavation of two shovel test probes (STPs) within the BPA fee-owned land, no cultural resources were identified within the APE. Therefore, on May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024, BPA determined the proposed project would result in no adverse effect of historic properties (BPA CR Project No.: WA 2024 053; DAHP Log No.:2024-02-00953). Oregon SHPO concurred with BPA's determination on June 25, 2024. No other responses were received.

Notes:

- In the event that cultural material is unexpectedly 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 a professional archaeologist.

## **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The new pipeline would have a temporary soil disturbance within the Northwest Pipeline easement crossing BPA's fee-owned land and would impact approximately 16,500 square feet (0.38 acres). Soil disturbance actions would involve vegetation and soil removal, soil compaction within the trench, construction vehicle access and minor grading of existing access road prisms. Temporarily disturbed soils would stabilize as vegetation is reestablished following completion of construction. Northwest Pipeline would be responsible for implementing county, state, and federal regulations for standard construction and best management practices (BMPs) to minimize erosion, sedimentation, and fugitive dust. Disturbed area would be restored to like and kind conditions and reseeded with native seed mix. The proposed action would not impact the current geology.

Notes: Temporary stockpiling of excavated dirt, rock, or other organic matter in BPA's rights-of-way would only occur during the removal and replacement of the new pipeline.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed construction would occur in vegetated and non-vegetated areas in and adjacent to compacted existing access roads. The additional temporary vegetation disturbance, such as crushing of vegetation and vegetation removal would occur from the proposed pipeline removal and installation, which would include temporary soil removal during trench excavation. Temporarily disturbed areas would be stabilized after trench backfill and reseeded with a regionally-appropriate native seed mix. Temporarily disturbed areas would eventually return to near preexisting conditions following completion of the proposed project. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status plant species, including plants listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), near the project site, and no suitable special-status species habitat would be permanently impacted..

Notes:

Reseed disturbed areas during the appropriate time period for germination with a native, regionally-appropriate seed mix.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would require clearing common native and non-native grasses, and shrubs that are not considered suitable habitat for special-status wildlife species. The minor and temporary disruption of normal wildlife behavior could occur from elevated noise and human presence during construction. However, there would be no permanent impacts to wildlife habitat, and temporarily disturbed or displaced wildlife species that could be present in the area would likely be habituated to this level of disturbance given surrounding land uses.

An ESA-listed Northern spotted owl management circle ends adjacent to the proposed project area. However, the Northern spotted owl prefer dense mixed forest cover for nesting, roosting and foraging. This type of habitat does not currently exist as the

proposed project area is not forested, does not have surrounding dense old growth tree stands, and is located near the Skamania Lodge Golf Resort and other private residential lots. The adjacent land uses result in continuous residential traffic, and resort maintenance noise from light duty mowers, human use, and vehicles. Also, no trees would be removed as part of the project within BPA's fee-owned rights-of-way. Therefore, the proposed project would have no effect on the northern spotted owl or designated critical habitat. There are no other ESA-listed or special-status wildlife species present within the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No water bodies, floodplains, or fish-bearing streams are present within or near the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies and flood plains and would have no effect on fish species or habitats.

## **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands at the proposed construction site. Therefore, the proposed action would have no effect on wetlands.

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The shallow digging and trenching proposed would have no impact to groundwater or aquifers.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change in land use and specially-designated areas as a result of the project. The proposed action would be located within Urban land use designation within the CRGNSA, which would not require consistency with the CRGNSA management plan.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Visual changes to the proposed area of construction would only be temporary due to the installation of the new pipeline. Disturbed areas would be stabilized and eventually return to previous visual conditions.

## **10. Air Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor temporary impacts to air quality from vehicle emissions are anticipated as a result of the project.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours. No ongoing noise increase is expected for this area as a result of this project.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to human health and safety are anticipated from the result of this project.

### **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 proposed action would occur on BPA fee-owned property.

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

Signed:

Sylas Daughtrey  
Environmental Protection Specialist