

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Mason County PUD Utility Distribution Pole Installation

**Project No.:** 20240047

**Project Manager:** Rallete Churchwell – TERR-OLYMPIA

**Location:** Mason County, Washington

**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:** BPA proposes to allow Mason County PUD to install a new 50-foot-tall utility distribution pole on its fee-owned property approximately 60 feet north of the Potlatch Substation fence. This new pole would hold a recloser and disconnect switch and would be installed with a guy wire and anchor to the south. No new access roads would be needed and the overall disturbance area to install the pole and guy would be about 50 square feet to accommodate trucks and the laydown area for the new pole.

**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.

Nancy A. Wittpenn  
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:** Mason County PUD Utility Distribution Pole Installation

## **Project Site Description**

The project site is located in a flat to gently rolling landscape surrounded by industrial forest lands with timber stands approximately 10-30 years old. The distribution pole would be installed in the cleared transmission right-of-way, which features low growing grasses and shrubs. A rural residential area is located approximately 0.3 miles to the north, otherwise there are no houses or structures other than electrical transmission system infrastructure nearby.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated Section 106 consultation on June 28, 2024 with the Skokomish Indian Tribe, the Squaxin Island Tribe, and the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). A field survey was conducted on March 6, 2024. BPA has determined that the proposed project would result in no historic properties affected. The Department of Historic Preservation concurred with BPA's determination of no effect on July 2, 2024. No other responses were received.

Notes: In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA requires that work be halted in the vicinity of the material until it can be inspected and assessed by the appropriate consulting parties. The BPA Inadvertent Discovery Protocol would be implemented.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Only two small holes would be excavated for the project: one for the new pole and one for the guy anchor. Very little excavated material would be produced. The surrounding landscape is level and vegetated so the likelihood of soils moving off site is very low. Minor impacts to geology and soils are expected.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No federally listed plants populations are documented in or near the project area. The existing low growing vegetation would be compacted by equipment associated with construction of the project but would not be removed. Potential for weed species to be introduced to or moved from the project area is low due to the low-growing nature of the existing vegetation and very limited ground disturbance. No to low impacts to plants are expected.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special status wildlife species have been identified in or around the project area. The nearest critical habitat for northern spotted owls is approximately 4 miles to the west. The surrounding forest lands are all industrial forests planted between 10 and 30 years ago which provide very limited habitat for spotted owls. Some small patches of habitat designated by USFWS as dispersal habitat are located close to the project area, but no nesting roosting or foraging habitat is located nearby. Any spotted owls present during construction would likely be dispersing individuals and noise and disturbance from construction activities would not impact them. BPA has determined that the project would have no effect on special status wildlife species. No trees or shrubs would be removed. Some common wildlife species within the project area could be temporarily disturbed during construction. Overall, the proposed project would have no-to-low impact on wildlife species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No water bodies or floodplains are present in or near the project area, therefore the proposed project would have no impact on water bodies or floodplains.

#### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Wetland surveys were completed in the transmission line ROW including the project area in 2021 and no wetlands were identified within the project area. A wetland exists in the cleared ROW approximately 130 feet west of the project area and across an access road. No construction would occur in the wetland and no runoff of sediment or other materials would reach the wetland due to the limited amount of soil disturbance and the vegetated nature of the surrounding area. No impact to wetlands would occur.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No areas of shallow groundwater exist within the project area and no aquifers are present. Only minor soil disturbance would occur. There would be no impact to groundwater or aquifers.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would not change any existing land uses. The proposed project is a transmission structure that would be constructed in a transmission line right of way. Surrounding industrial timber production would not be affected by the proposed project. No impacts to land uses or specially-designated areas would occur.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The new utility distribution pole would be constructed in an existing right of way and substation area that contains existing towers and transmission line infrastructure. The nearest sensitive viewer (a residence) is approximately 0.30 miles away from the proposed project and screened by terrain and vegetation. The proposed project would have no impact to visual quality.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some minor fugitive dust and construction equipment emissions would occur during construction. Construction would be of short duration and temporary. No long-term emissions from operation of the new utility distribution pole would occur. The proposed project would have low impacts to air quality.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction equipment and activity would increase noise during construction. Construction would be of short duration and temporary. The nearest residence is approximately 0.3 miles away and screened by terrain and vegetation, therefore any construction noise that reaches that area would be minor. The proposed project would have low impacts to noise.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Installation of the proposed utility distribution pole would not create conditions that would adversely affect human health and safety and would improve utility operations, leading to improved health and safety metrics from improved reliability. No impact to human health and safety would occur.

### **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 project would occur on BPA fee-owned land. No public notification would occur.

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

Signed:

Nancy A. Wittpenn  
Environmental Protection Specialist