

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Heyburn-Minico No. 1 Reconductor

Project No.: P04353

Project Manager: Mike Henjum, TEPS-TPP-1

Location: Minidoka County, Idaho

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance; B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to reconductor the first two spans (approximately 250 linear feet) of the 138-kilovolt (kV) Heyburn-Minico No. 1 transmission line in Heyburn, Minidoka County, Idaho. All three existing transmission structures would remain, and only the conductor and conductor hardware would be replaced. In addition, new jumpers from Heyburn-Minico No. 1 down to the substation equipment would be installed. Structure 1/2 is the only work area located outside of the Heyburn Substation yard. Work crews would access this structure via an existing access road, and all vehicles and equipment would be operated from the road. Pulling and tensioning equipment would be staged within the previously-disturbed and graveled substation yard.

The Federal Columbia River Transmission System Act directs BPA to construct improvements, additions, and replacements to its transmission system that are necessary to maintain electrical stability and reliability, as well as to provide service to BPA's customers (16 United States Code [U.S.C] § 838b(b-d)).

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; 89 FR 34074, April 30, 2024), 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. ¹

Walker Stinnette
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

¹ BPA is aware of the November 12, 2024, decision in *Marin Audubon Society v. Federal Aviation Administration*, No. 23-1067 (D.C. Cir. Nov. 12, 2024). To the extent that a court may conclude that the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA are not judicially enforceable or binding on this agency action, BPA has nonetheless elected to follow those regulations at 40 Code Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) §§ 1500– 1508, in addition to the US Department of Energy’s NEPA implementing procedures at 10 C.F.R. Part § 1021, to meet the agency’s obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 *et seq.*

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: Heyburn-Minico No. 1 Reconductor

Project Site Description

The project site is located at Heyburn Substation in Heyburn, Minidoka County, Idaho (Township 10 South, Range 23 East, Sections 10 and 15). Work would occur on BPA fee-owned property within the existing Heyburn Substation yard and at structure 1/2, which is owned by Idaho Power Company and is located on private property north of the substation across 21st Street. All proposed activities, including materials and equipment staging and operation, would occur within previously-disturbed and graveled areas where little to no vegetation or suitable wildlife habitat is present. There are no wetlands or surface waters within or near the project site. The project site is surrounded by a mix of industrial, commercial, and agricultural properties.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA previously determined that Heyburn Substation is not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Concurrence with BPA's determination was received from the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in 2018. The proposed action would occur entirely within the existing substation yard and on existing access roads, which have been substantially disturbed. It is highly unlikely that archaeological resources would be identified during construction. Therefore, BPA determined, per 36 CFR 800.3(a)(1), that this project is a type of activity that does not have the potential to cause effects on historic properties, assuming such historic properties were present.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not require any excavation, and all vehicles and equipment would be operated within the previously-disturbed and graveled substation yard and on existing roads. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact geology or soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Vehicles and equipment would be operated within the graveled substation yard and on existing roads, where little to no vegetation is present. Common weedy plant species could be crushed or stripped if present within the road prism. No special-status plant species or habitats are present.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary wildlife disturbance could occur from elevated noise and human presence during construction. It is expected that most species would be able to temporarily move out of the area during construction and then would likely reoccupy the site following completion of the proposed action. There would be no permanent impacts to wildlife habitat. No special-status wildlife species or habitats are present.

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 are present. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies or floodplains and would have no effect on fish species or habitats.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not require any excavation, and standard best management practices would reduce the potential for inadvertent spills of hazardous materials that could contaminate groundwater or aquifers. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not require a change in land use, and the project site is not located in a specially-designated area.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not result in an overtly noticeable change in the appearance of the transmission line or substation yard.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would cause a minor and temporary increase in emissions in the local area from vehicle and equipment use. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the proposed action.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would result in minor and temporary noise from the use of vehicles and equipment during construction, which could intermittently exceed current ambient conditions. The proposed action would be completed in no more than 5 days, and noise impacts would only occur during daylight hours (approximately 7 AM to 7 PM). There would be no permanent change in ambient noise following completion of the proposed action.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All standard safety protocols would be followed throughout implementation of the proposed action to minimize risk to human health and safety. Therefore, the proposed action would not be expected to impact human health and safety.

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 or on property where BPA has an agreement with the underlying landowner. BPA would notify, involve, and coordinate with underlying and adjacent landowners, as necessary.

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

Signed: _____
Walker Stinnette
Environmental Protection Specialist