

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Proposed Open Access Transmission Tariff (TC-26)

Project Manager: Brian McConnell- TSQ-TPP-2

Location: Portland, OR

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.4 Power marketing services and activities; B4.8 Electric transmission agreements

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to adopt and implement the modifications to the Open Access Transmission Tariff, commonly known as Tariff or OATT, described in the 2026 Tariff Terms and Conditions Proceeding (TC-26 proceeding). BPA agreed to propose the modifications to the Tariff in a settlement with customers and stakeholders, who were prospective parties to the TC-26 proceeding. The Tariff includes the terms and conditions of general applicability for all transmission products and services provided by BPA over the Federal Columbia River Transmission System (FCRTS). The proceeding followed the procedural requirements of Section 9 of the Tariff and Section 212(i)(2)(A) of the Federal Power Act.

Modifications to the existing Tariff would include the establishment of a Generator Interconnection Withdrawal Charge, which would further streamline the new large generator interconnection cluster study process that BPA adopted in TC-25. The establishment of the withdrawal charge would encourage customers to make informed decisions on whether to proceed with their requests and would allow BPA to process the request queue more efficiently.

Additionally, the proposed modifications to the existing Tariff include the addition of new requirements for accuracy and transparency of transmission line ratings consistent with both the Federal Regulatory Energy Commission's Order No. 881 and BPA's obligation to maintain reliability of the FCRTS; updates to Summer and Non-Summer Network Loss Factors; additions or revisions to standard templates for transmission and interconnection service, and other administrative clarifications and updates..

The Tariff adopted in this proceeding would supersede and replace BPA's existing transmission tariff in its entirety, effective on October 1, 2025. Further information on the proposed tariff can be found in the TC-26 Tariff Proceeding, Administrators Record of Decision, March 7, 2025 located at <https://www.bpa.gov/learn-and-participate/public-involvement-decisions/record-of-decisions>.

The proposed modified Tariff would establish interconnection withdrawal changes and other modifications but continues the existing transmission products and services offerings currently provided by BPA. The changes to the Tariff that would occur are all generally administrative and procedural in nature. These changes in the Tariff are not expected to result in any physical changes in BPA's transmission system beyond previously disturbed or developed facilities or to cause the development of any new generation resources. Furthermore, all existing generation projects would be expected to continue to operate within normal operating limits and consistently

with applicable environmental laws and regulations, including compliance with the National Marine Fisheries Service and US Fish and Wildlife Service 2020 Biological Opinions on the operations and maintenance of the Columbia River System, the Columbia River System Operation (CRSO) EIS Record of Decision, and any related court orders or other agreements.

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.¹

Amy Mai
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.

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Project Site Description

BPA markets wholesale electrical power from 31 hydroelectric power plant projects in the Northwest, one non-federal nuclear plant, and several small nonfederal power plants. BPA also operates and maintains about three fourths of the high-voltage transmission in its service territory that spans Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Western Montana, and parts of eastern Montana, California, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action involves administrative and procedural activities related to BPA's tariff. The updated transmission tariff would not result in any ground disturbing activities or changes to any existing structures or landscapes. In addition, all generation projects would continue to operate within normal operating limits. For these reasons the modifications would not affect historic and cultural resources.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action involves administrative and procedural activities related to BPA's tariff. The updated transmission would not result in any ground disturbing activities or have any potential for erosion, landslides, or other related impacts. In addition, all generation projects would continue to operate within normal operating limits. For these reasons, the tariff modifications would not affect geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action involves administrative and procedural activities related to BPA's tariff. The updated transmission tariff would not result in any ground disturbing activities or vegetation removal or alteration. In addition, all generation projects would continue to operate within normal operating limits. For these reasons, the tariff modifications would not affect plants.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action involves administrative and procedural activities related to BPA's tariff. The updated transmission tariff would not result in any ground disturbing activities or potential to cause impacts to special status species and habitats. In addition, all generation projects would continue to operate within normal operating limits. For these reasons, the tariff modifications would not affect wildlife.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action involves administrative and procedural activities related to BPA's tariff. The updated transmission tariff would not result in any ground-disturbing activities or potential to cause impacts to water bodies, floodplains, and fish, including federal/state-special status species and ESUs. In addition, all generation projects would continue to operate within normal operating limits. For these reasons the tariff modifications would not affect water bodies, floodplains, and fish, including federal/state special status species and ESUs.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action involves administrative and procedural activities related to BPA's tariff. The updated transmission tariff would not result in any ground-disturbing activities or potential to cause impacts to wetlands. In addition, all generation projects would continue to operate within normal operating limits. For these reasons, the tariff modifications would not affect wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action involves administrative and procedural activities related to BPA's tariff. The updated transmission tariff would not result in any ground-disturbing activities or potential to cause impacts to groundwater and aquifers. In addition, all projects would continue to operate within normal operating limits. For these reasons, the tariff modifications would not affect groundwater and aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action involves administrative and procedural activities related to BPA's tariff. The updated transmission tariff would not result in any ground-disturbing activities or potential to cause impacts to land-use and specially designated areas. In addition, all

generation projects will continue to operate within normal operating limits. For these reasons, the tariff modifications would not affect land use and specially designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action involves administrative and procedural activities related to BPA's tariff. The updated transmission tariff would not result in any ground-disturbing activities or potential to cause impacts to visual quality. In addition, all generation projects will continue to operate within normal operating limits. For these reasons the tariff modifications would not affect visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action involves administrative and procedural activities related to BPA's tariff. The updated transmission tariff would not result in any ground-disturbing activities or potential to cause impacts to air quality. In addition, all generation projects would continue to operate within normal operating limits. For these reasons, the tariff modifications would not affect air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action involves administrative and strategic activities related to BPA's tariff. The updated transmission tariff would not result in any ground-disturbing activities or potential to cause noise impacts. In addition, all generation projects would continue to operate within normal operating limits. For these reasons, the tariff modifications would not affect noise.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action involves administrative and procedural activities related to BPA's tariff. The updated transmission tariff would not result in any ground-disturbing activities or potential to cause impacts on human health and safety. In addition, all generation projects would continue to operate within normal operating limits. For these reasons, the tariff modifications would not affect 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: Because the proposed action does not involve activities directly or indirectly affecting any particular real property, notification and involvement of any specific landowner is not required. However, BPA conducted the TC-26 proceedings consistent with procedures under the Federal Power Act and Northwest Power Act, which included notifying the public of the tariff modification proposal through the Federal Register, allowing public comments on the proposal, and involving potentially affected parties during the development of the final proposal

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

Signed: _____
Amy Mai
Environmental Protection Specialist