

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: FY25 Ellensburg District Priority Pole Replacements

Project No.: 6771

Project Manager: Raymond Cheng, TEPL-TPP-1

Location: Chelan and Yakima Counties, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to replace deteriorating wood pole structures and associated structural/electrical components (e.g., cross arms, insulators, guy anchors, etc.) on two structures on two different transmission lines in the Ellensburg district.

See table below for structure names and locations on the transmission lines.

Transmission Line/ROW	Structure #	Township	Range	Section	County, State
Columbia-Valhalla #2	4/7	21N	22E	6	Chelan, WA
North Bonneville-Midway #1	118/5	11N	22E	34	Yakima, WA

The structures would be replaced in kind, which would ideally be done by pulling the existing structure out of the ground, auguring the existing hole and placing a new pole in the ground. In some instances, a backhoe would be necessary to excavate a larger hole for a pole to avoid sediment collapse. On occasion, new holes would be excavated, typically within five feet of the existing hole. Work areas would be about 50 feet by 50 feet at each of the structure replacement locations.

Access road maintenance would be limited to minor blading, grading, and rocking of access road segments that have become impassable. All road maintenance would take place in the existing road prism.

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. All work would be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA standards.

The Federal Columbia River Transmission System Act directs BPA to construct, acquire, operate, maintain, repair, relocate, and replace the transmission system, including facilities and structures appurtenant thereto. (16 United States Code [U.S.C] § 838i(b)). The Administrator is further charged with maintaining electrical stability and reliability, selling transmission and interconnection services, and providing service to BPA's customers. (16 U.S.C § 838b(b-d)). The Administrator is also authorized to conduct electrical research, development, experimentation, tests, and

investigation related to construction, operation, and maintenance of transmission systems and facilities. (16 U.S.C § 838i(b)(3)).

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

/s/ Shawn L. Barndt

Shawn L. Barndt
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey Grange
NEPA Compliance Officers Date: March 31, 2025

Attachment(s):
Environmental Checklist

¹ "BPA is aware that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), on February 25, 2025, issued an interim final rule to remove its NEPA implementing regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500–1508. Based on CEQ guidance, and to promote completion of its NEPA review in a timely manner and without delay, in this CX BPA is voluntarily relying on the CEQ regulations, in addition to DOE's own regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021, to meet its 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: FY25 Ellensburg District Priority Pole Replacements.

Project Site Description

See table below for structure names and locations on the transmission lines.

Transmission Line/ROW	Structure #	Township	Range	Section	County, State
Columbia-Valhalla #2	4/7	21N	22E	6	Chelan, WA
North Bonneville-Midway #1	118/5	11N	22E	34	Yakima, WA

Structures being replaced are in easements on private property. These structures are located within scablands or agricultural fields.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation:

BPA initiated consultation on December 4, 2024 (BPA CR Project No.: WA 2024 163; DAHP log no. 2024-11-08530). Consulting parties included the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). DAHP responded on December 4, 2024, and concurred with the delineated APE. No other responses were received during the initial 30-day period. The survey was conducted on January 29, 2025, and no archaeological resources were observed in the project area of potential effects. BPA has determined that this undertaking has no adverse effect on the historic transmission lines. The survey report and determination of **no adverse effect to historic properties** was sent to consulting parties on February 24, 2025. DAHP concurred with the determination on February 25, 2025. No other responses were received during the 30-day period.

Notes:

- In the event that archaeological or historic materials are discovered during project activities, work in the immediate vicinity must stop, the area would be secured, and OR SHPO/DAHP and the environmental project lead must be notified.
- Crews and equipment are to use existing access roads to and from each work site.
- Limit access road maintenance to the existing road prism.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Localized soil disturbance would occur during wood pole replacement and access road improvements. 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 disturbance to vegetation is anticipated. 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

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. The project would have no impacts to state or federally listed sensitive species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project areas are not located within a floodplain. Erosion control best management practices combined with the distance to the nearest waterbody would ensure that sedimentation would not enter into any water body.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are 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 and access road prisms. Replacement of the wood pole and associated components would be in kind and replaced in the same location.

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 Realty personnel, environmental specialist and archaeologist have coordinated the proposed project activities with the landowners prior to project initiation and any concerns regarding proposed transmission line maintenance activities have been addressed.

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

Signed: /s/ Shawn Barndt
Shawn L. Barndt
Tri Cities RMHQ

Date: March 31, 2025