

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: AT&T Zahler Access Road on St. Johns-Keeler No. 2

Project No.: LURR 20220183

Project Manager: Charlene R. Belt – TERR-TPP-2

Location: Multnomah County, Oregon

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 AT&T/Zahler to construct a new, permanent access road within BPA's Saint Johns – Keeler No. 2 transmission line right-of-way. The proposed access road would run east-west, perpendicular to the right-of-way in the span between structures 6/4 and 6/5. The approximately 12-foot-wide and 298-foot-long access road would originate from a private road and would cross BPA fee-owned property to a proposed new wireless tower (located off BPA property).

Construction of the road would require clearing vegetation, grading and compacting the roadbed, installation of 12-inch-diameter culvert, and permanently laying a minimum 8 inches of crushed rock on approximately 100 feet of BPA fee-owned property. Approximately 1,200 square feet of BPA's fee-owned property would be permanently affected by the proposed access road.

The access road would originate from an existing private residential asphalt paved road that parallels the BPA transmission line. Underground fiber and power would be installed along the new access road. Trenches would be approximately 24 inches deep, 18 inches wide, 250 foot long, and would connect existing sources along the existing private road to the new wireless tower. Temporary ground disturbance from vehicles, equipment uses, and excavation for the power and fiber installation could extend out approximately 19 feet from both sides of the new access road, for a total temporary disturbance area of 3,800 square feet within BPA's right-of-way. Excavated soil would be used for backfilling or disposed of off BPA property in accordance with all applicable local, state, and Federal regulations. Temporarily disturbed areas during construction would be re-contoured and reseeded with an appropriate native seed mix.

BPA authorizes the use of and manages its fee-owned lands pursuant to its authority under sections 2(e) and 2(f) of the Bonneville Project Act. 16 U.S.C. § 832a(e)-(f).

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

Sylas M. Daughtrey
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

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.

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Project Site Description

The project site is located on BPA fee-owned right-of-way between structures 6/4 and 6/5 on the St. Johns-Keeler No. 2 transmission line in Beaverton, Multnomah County, Oregon T1North, Range 1 West, Section 16. Neighboring parcels consist of residential housing and semi agricultural uses within Multnomah County, Oregon and Washington County, Oregon. Current vegetation within the proposed project site consists of low-lying shrubs and non-native grasses.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Pursuant to its responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and implementing regulations 36 CFR 800, BPA initiated consultation with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) case number 24-1901, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Siletz nation and the Confederated Tribes of the Cowlitz Reservation of Oregon on March 24, 2025. BPA conducted background research utilizing the Oregon Archaeological Records Remote Access (OARRA) database followed by an intensive field survey of the Area of Potential Effects (APE).

The Oregon SHPO concurred with the APE and the finding of no adverse effect to historic properties on April 21, 2025. No other responses were received within 30 days. In the unlikely event that cultural resources or historic properties are inadvertently 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 BPA and in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

Historical properties and cultural resources have determined no adverse effect for the proposed project.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed access road project would involve removing existing soil within BPA's right-of-way and replacing or adding approximately 8 inches of graded, compacted gravel. Permanent soil impacts would occur where the ground surface would be permanently compacted and/or covered in gravel; approximately 1200 square feet would be on BPA's right-of-way. Soils that would be temporarily disturbed by the proposed action, including by trenching, would stabilize as vegetation is reestablished and would eventually return to pre-existing condition following completion of the project.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Searches of state heritage database occurrences resulted in no records of sensitive state or federally-listed plant species within 5 miles of the proposed access road project. Current vegetation within the proposed project site would involve temporary and permanent vegetation impacts due to excavation and new road construction. Only necessary vegetation would be removed or disturbed. Any disturbed areas surrounding the proposed access road would be stabilized and seeded with a native seed mix.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Searches of state heritage database occurrences resulted in no records of sensitive state or federally-listed wildlife species within 3 miles of the proposed access road project.

The proposed work site would be located within areas outside critical habitat. Temporary disturbance to non-sensitive wildlife may occur during work periods due to construction noise from light duty construction vehicles and equipment.

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. No impacts to water bodies, floodplains, or fish are expected.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: A review of the National Wetland Inventory, soil information, topography, and aerial photos did not reveal any wetlands or water bodies at the proposed site; however, a wetland delineation report commissioned by AT&T discovered an active wetland located between BPA structures 6/3 and 6/4 just north of the proposed project. Project design and construction would have no impacts to wetlands as there are no wetlands present within the proposed project site and sediment would be controlled so that soils do not leave the work area.

Notes: Construction of the proposed project would incorporate specific minimization measures:

- A temporary silt fence would be installed to ensure that sediment and sediment laden water does not enter the drainage system, surrounding wetland, roadways, or violate applicable water standards.
- All stabilized gravel entrances shall be installed at the beginning of construction and maintained for the duration of the project.
- Additional cleaning measures would be implemented to ensure all paved areas are kept clean for the duration of the project.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Excavation is unlikely to reach depth to groundwater and aquifers, if present. No impacts to groundwater and aquifers are expected.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The proposed access road would involve a new compacted permanent gravel access road within BPA's fee-owned ROW. The new access road, approximately 1,200 square-feet, would be constructed in areas that are currently undeveloped, which would require a permanent change in land use; however, it would be consistent with existing land use in the area and no impacts to adjacent land uses or specially-designated areas are expected.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is located along a lightly traveled private road with minimal pedestrian access. Some minor visual changes from the proposed access road would occur which may only be visible from nearby residential areas.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some temporary, minor fugitive dust and vehicle emissions would occur during construction. No long-term changes to air quality would occur. No significant impact to air quality is expected from the project.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some temporary noise from equipment and vehicles would occur during construction and during daylight hours. No significant impact from noise is expected.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No hazardous materials except common fuel and oil products would be used during construction of the project. No impact to human health and safety is expected.

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. For portions of the larger project not occurring on BPA property, the applicant would be responsible for any landowner notification, involvement, or coordination.

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 Protections Specialist