Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: Toledo – Wendson No. 1 Line Miles 15 & 16 Access Road Improvement Project Phase II

PP&A No.: 4,617

Project Manager: Donna Martin, TELF-TPP-3

Location: Lincoln County, OR

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

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to improve the existing access road system along the Toledo-Wendson No. 1 transmission line in southwestern Oregon. BPA owns and operates this transmission line, which extends from Toledo Substation in Lincoln County, OR, to Wendson Substation in Lane County, OR, within the Coast Mountain Range. BPA maintains a network of roads that service the line, providing access for transmission line maintenance crews for inspection, routine maintenance, and emergency response. BPA has identified sections of these access roads in Lincoln County, specifically within line miles 15 and 16 as the line trends south from Toledo Substation, that need improvement.

Specifically, BPA proposes to perform routine access road maintenance, reconstruction, and mowing to clear shrubs and low-growing vegetation. Proposed maintenance ranges from light blading, adding rock and compaction (improvements), to heavier blading and re-contouring, adding rock, and compaction (reconstruction). Approximately 0.5 miles of improvements and 950 feet of reconstruction are planned. In addition, at one location, a section of the road footprint would be re-aligned, resulting in approximately 250 feet of new access road construction and subsequent road decommissioning. Drainage features such as drain dips, waterbars, cross drain culverts, and ditching would be added where necessary to manage stormwater runoff, directing it off the road and into adjacent vegetation for infiltration. A gate would also be replaced.

Typical equipment for this project includes graders, rollers, bulldozers, excavators, backhoes, dump trucks, and light-duty trucks, with crews of three to eight individuals. The project is currently planned for late summer of 2026.

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 1021.102 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; 90 FR 29676, July 3, 2025 [Interim Final Rule]) and *DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Implementing Procedures* (dated June 30, 2025), BPA has determined the following:

1) The proposed action fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021;
2) The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion; and
3) There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal (see attached Environmental Evaluation).

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

/s/ *Aaron Siemers*
Aaron Siemers
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ *Katey Grange*
Katey C. Grange Date: *February 26, 2026*
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Evaluation

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Evaluation

This evaluation 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: Toledo – Wendson No. 1 Line Miles 15 & 16 Access Road Improvement Project Phase II

Project Site Description

The Toledo-Wendson No. 1 Line Miles 15 and 16 Access Road Improvement Project is located in the Oregon Coast Range, in the Coastal Uplands ecoregion. The ecoregion is comprised of the headlands, high marine terraces, hills and low mountains that border the coastal lowlands, with the Pacific Ocean relatively close to the west. The climate is heavily influenced by marine influenced, with rainy winters and abundant fog during the dry summer season, which reduces vegetation stress. The ecoregion roughly follows the historic distribution of Sitka spruce in the Coast Range, but after extensive logging, tree cover today is mainly comprised of western hemlock and Douglas fir, and red alder in riparian areas. The understory is comprised of salal, sword fern, vine maple, and other common Northwest shrubs. Topography can vary dramatically from peak to valley.

The Toledo-Wendson No. 1 high voltage transmission corridor is the central component of the project area. The cleared corridor is approximately 125 feet in width. Vegetation in the corridor is routinely managed to promote low-growing species and cut any tall-growing trees that could encroach on the energized conductor. Access roads, usually compacted rock and/or dirt, intersect the corridor and provide access to the line's steel lattice structures.

The South Fork Beaver Creek intersects the project area. This waterway provides habitat for endangered coho salmon, and other salmonids such as Chinook salmon and steelhead. The surrounding forest also provides habitat for numerous animals, including mammals like deer and elk, birds, and species listed under the Endangered Species Act such as marbled murrelet and northern spotted owl.

The project area occurs on private land including private timber lands as well as forested rural residential properties.

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, on January 10, 2022, BPA initiated consultation with The Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the United States Forest Service – Siuslaw National Forest (USFS), and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). An area of potential effects (APE) was developed for a larger project area between line miles 1 through 19 and shared with consulting parties. BPA conducted

background research followed by an intensive field survey of the APE. As a result of the archaeological field survey and background research, no historic properties were identified in the APE. On September 20, 2022, BPA determined that the project would have no effect to historic properties and received SHPO concurrence October 17, 2022.

On November 11, 2025, BPA re-engaged with the consulted parties and proposed additional road improvements in line miles 15 and 16. BPA determined that the additional road improvements would be consistent with the original determination of no effect to historic properties. There were no comments during the comment period.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA will 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.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Access road improvements and reconstruction would involve blading of existing road footprint, followed by placement of base rock, compaction, and placement of surface rock and compaction. Road cuts and ground disturbance in these areas would be relatively minimal, as no new road footprint is planned. Disturbed, un-rocked soils would be stabilized with hydromulch and native seed or weed free straw and native seed. As necessary, and particularly near sensitive areas, erosion and sediment control best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented, such as straw mulch, wattles, and silt fence.

Proposed new road construction would involve approximately 250 linear feet of new road footprint, as well as excavation and on-site borrow of approximately 100-500 cubic yards of local material. In these locations, disturbed soils would be used as fill to rebuild the grade and stabilized by rock or spread on-site and stabilized by using erosion and sediment control best-management practices such as seed and straw, erosion control blankets, and/or hydroseeding with tackifier.
The abandoned road section would be de-compacted by ripping with heavy machinery, followed by the application of seed and mulch for stabilization.

Notes:

- BPA's access road contractor would develop and implement an erosion control plan to minimize erosion and sedimentation on the project. Locations would be restored with hydroseed and soil amendment in locations with steep slopes, and seed and straw in flatter areas.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Access road improvements would disturb the vegetation that is immediately adjacent to or growing within the existing road footprint. In those locations with planned maintenance, impacts to vegetation would therefore be limited and unrocked, disturbed areas would be seeded and monitored to ensure revegetation. For the proposed 250 linear feet of new, proposed roadway, existing vegetation, which in the managed ROW consists of low-growing forbs, shrubs, and grasses, would be impacted during road construction as heavy machinery blades the ground in preparation for the placement of rock. However, vegetation impacts would be limited to the new road footprint, and all disturbed soils would

be seeded with a native seed mix, mulched, and monitored to ensure revegetation goals are met.

In accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), BPA obtained an official species list on October 13, 2022, and an updated species list on February 3, 2026, from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in order to analyze the proposed project's impacts to plant species protected under the ESA. No ESA-listed plant species are present in the project area, therefore the project would have "No Effect" on ESA-listed species. Similarly, the project would not have impacts to sensitive plant species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Access road construction activity would temporarily disturb local wildlife, including mammals and birds, due to human presence and noise from heavy equipment. However, disturbance would be temporary, during daylight hours, and limited to the immediate access road area. The surrounding forest provides ample habitat and cover for any wildlife disturbed by the project's activities.

In accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), BPA obtained an official species list on October 13, 2022, from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and an updated species list on February 3, 2026, in order to analyze the proposed project's impacts to species protected under the ESA. Marbled murrelet, northern spotted owl, and western snowy plover, along with candidate species Northwestern pond turtle, monarch butterfly, and Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee were listed in the project area. Northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet designated critical habitat is also present in the project area. BPA determined that the project would have "No effect" on monarch butterfly, Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee, and Northwestern pond turtle, and "may effect, not likely to adversely affect" for northern spotted owl, and marbled murrelet. BPA determined that the project would have "No effect" on designated critical habitat for northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet. On October 14, 2022, BPA submitted a Biological Assessment with request for informal consultation and concurrence to the USFWS Oregon Coast Field Office. BPA received a Letter of Concurrence from USFWS on November 22, 2022 (consultation code 2022-0035121). BPA has determined that proposed Phase II work is consistent with the action description and analysis described in the 2022 Biological Assessment and ESA consultation, and therefore no additional consultation under Section 7 of the ESA is required. During construction, BPA's access road contractors would implement daily and seasonal timing restrictions in those locations with suitable northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet.

Notes:

- Conduct all road construction activities within 110 yards of moderately high and highest quality marbled murrelet habitat (NW Forest Plan's Habitat Model), located in contiguous habitat stands larger than 5 acres, at the end of the critical marbled murrelet nesting season, post August 5th and prior to April 1st.
- Conduct all road construction activities within 65 yards of contiguous suitable and highly suitable NW Forest Plan modeled northern spotted owl habitat during the late nesting season, post July 16th and prior to March 1st.
  *Note – northern spotted owl timing restriction locations are essentially the same as those areas with marbled murrelet, moderately high and highest modeled habitat. Therefore, the marbled murrelet timing restriction, which extends later into the nesting season, will supersede the spotted owl conservation measure, and will be implemented.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: South Beaver Creek runs through the project area. The stream is home to native endangered salmon and other fish. However, no work is planned in the stream. The majority of the project occurs on existing road footprint and proposed new road construction would not impact local waterways or the floodplains.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Wetlands are present adjacent to South Beaver Creek in span 16/1. However, no work is planned in the wetland, and the area would be avoided during construction to reduce the potential for temporary impacts.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Road construction activity, including grading and blading, would not occur at a depth that would intersect or impact groundwater and aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Current land use consists of private timber lands, private rural residential areas, and high voltage transmission corridor. The proposed project would not alter current land use. In some locations, public access to private lands may be restricted due to the installation of new gates. Access to these areas would be managed by the underlying landowner.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The current visual profile of the project area consists of high-voltage transmission line corridor and access roads and would not be significantly altered by the proposed project.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would have limited, temporary impacts to air quality due to heavy equipment operation and traffic related to the construction project. However, impacts would be insignificant, and the project is located in remote areas that generally do not have background air quality problems.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would have limited, temporary impacts to noise related to heavy equipment operations. However, construction activity would occur during daylight hours,

when potential impacts to people and wildlife would be minimized, and the project is located in remote areas, without many human receptors.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would benefit human health and safety, both to BPA's transmission linemen and vegetation management crews, providing safer transportation to the high voltage corridor, as well as to the general public, as safe reliable power is a public human health and safety concern.

Prior to construction, BPA's access road contractor would submit a Safety Plan to BPA's safety office for review, comment and approval, and the plan would be implemented in the field. All job hazards would be identified in the Safety Plan and mitigated to the extent possible during construction.

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 has reached out to stakeholders including private landowners to discuss the project and potential impacts and would continue to coordinate as construction start date approaches.

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

Signed: /s/ *Aaron Siemers* Date: *February 26, 2026*
Aaron Siemers
Environmental Protection Specialist/Physical Scientist (Environmental)