

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Easton Communication Site Access Road (NF-4823) Improvements

**Project No.:** P00834

**Project Managers:** Ben Younce, TEP-CSB-1  
Carla Clay, TEP-CSB-2

**Location:** Kittitas County, Washington

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

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund or perform access road improvements to approximately 4 miles of existing U.S. Forest Service (USFS) access road (NF-4823) located south of Interstate 90, in Kittitas County, Washington. This segment of NF-4823 is used to access BPA's Easton Communication Site. Activities associated with improvements at the Easton Communication Site were addressed in two previous categorical exclusions (CX) issued on July 24, 2017 and March 28, 2018; this CX addresses additional road improvements required to access the site.

Proposed access road improvement activities would include grading, blading, creating water bars and other water diversion features, and applying new gravel or other road surface materials to the 4 miles of existing access road. There would be no changes to the road prism. Water may be applied to the access road to mitigate for dust during work activities.

**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, July 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.

/s/ Becky Hill

Becky Hill  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Flux Resources, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey Grange

Acting Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason

Stacy L. Mason

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: January 2, 2019

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

# 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 area is located in Kittitas County, Washington and consists of approximately 4 miles of an existing, unpaved, U.S. Forest Service access road (NF-4823), located south of Interstate 90. The 4 miles of access road is located within T21N R12E Sec 24, Sec 25, Sec 36, Sec 31, and T20N R13E Sec 5 and 6, and is located on lands administered by the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, Cle Elum Ranger District (USFS). The access road roughly parallels the Yakima River's bank at variable distances ranging from 6 inches to 0.5 mile. Few rural residences are located within a mile of the project area, and the region is primarily made up of a mature forest landscape in mountainous terrain.

## Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. <b>Historic and Cultural Resources</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The BPA archaeologist initiated Section 106 consultation on December 19, 2016, with the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), USFS, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation.</p> <p>An Archaeological Resources Protection Act permit was received from the USFS on October 4, 2017.</p> <p>On November 15, 2018 the BPA archaeologist determined that implementation of the proposed undertaking would result in no historic properties affected. On that same day, DAHP concurred with the archaeologist's determination. No response was received from the USFS, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe or the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation.</p>		
2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Ground disturbance activities are proposed within the existing access road's prism, where the ground has been previously disturbed and improved. The deepest anticipated depth to excavate and improve access road potholes would be less than 8 inches deep. Best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented to address any erosion or sedimentation concerns that may arise.</p>		
3. <b>Plants (including federal/state special-status species)</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Minimal vegetation has established in the access road due to frequent vehicle disruptions, the type of substrate (gravel), and the shallow depth of that gravel substrate. The vegetation that has established, primarily along the road's edges and in the center line, are weedy species that would be destroyed or displaced when the road is improved.</p> <p>There are no documented occurrences of any plants listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in the project area; therefore, the proposed project would not have an effect on ESA-listed plant species.</p>		

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



Explanation: The BPA contract Environmental Protection Specialist coordinated with the United States Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service Washington Fish and Wildlife Office, Central Washington Field Office (USFWS) during the summer of 2017. BPA submitted a Biological Assessment (BA) on February 26, 2018, with a 'may affect, but not likely to adversely affect' [NLAA] determination for the following ESA-listed species and designated critical habitat: the northern spotted owl, the northern spotted owl's designated critical habitat, the Canada lynx, and the gray wolf. The BA included the following conservation measures to implement to mitigate for potential wildlife impacts:

- **Timing restrictions – No construction work would be performed between March 1 and July 31 of each calendar year**
- **Noise reduction – no blasting activities would be performed at any time during this project**

USFWS concurrence was received on March 22, 2018, for BPA's NLAA determination for the northern spotted owl and its designated critical habitat, the Canada lynx, and the gray wolf. No other Threatened or Endangered species occur near the project area.

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



Explanation: No access road work would be performed within 25 feet of the Yakima River; therefore, avoiding impacts to waterbodies, floodplains and fish.

- **Work area restriction – Approximately 1,000 linear feet of access road is located within 25 feet of the Yakima River; no work would be performed in this stretch of road to avoid impacts to the river**

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: No access road work would be performed outside of the existing access road prism. Although there are 4 wetlands located within 25 feet of the access road, BMPs would be implemented to avoid potential impacts to those wetlands.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: The shallow depth of ground disturbance activities (up to 8 inches) would not impact ground water or aquifer resources potentially located in the region.

8. **Land Use and Specially Designated Areas**



Explanation: There would be no permanent changes to land use at this location.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: Project activities would not impact the visual quality of the area because the gravel access road is already established and would be improved with similar surface materials.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: There may be temporary dust and vehicle emissions during construction activities. BMPs would be implemented to reduce potential impacts to air quality.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: There would be temporary, intermittent noise from access road improvement activities during daylight hours. BMPs would be implemented to reduce potential impacts from project noise.

## 12. Human Health and Safety



Explanation: BMPs would be implemented, such as signage or flaggers at either end of the construction area to inform oncoming vehicles of the road work ahead. No impacts to human health and safety from the project activities.

### **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, if necessary:

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

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### **Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Description: BPA is coordinating with the USFS. Should BPA or its contractors perform the access road improvements, then landowner notification letters would be mailed to property owners with land located near the areas to be improved, prior to performing the work.

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

Signed: /s/ Becky Hill  
Becky Hill, ECT-4  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Flux Resources, LLC

Date: January 2, 2019