

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Bonneville-Hood River and Knight-Ostrander Access Road Repair

Project Manager: A. Williams, TEP-TPP-1

Location: Multnomah County, OR

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 repair Access Road 001-062 in two locations in Multnomah County, Oregon. As a result of slope instability due to the Eagle Creek Fire, portions of the access road have slid down the hillside. Access Road 001-062 is located about 0.3 mile south of Bonneville Dam and it provides access to line mile 1 of the Bonneville-Hood River transmission line and line mile 62 of the Knight-Ostrander transmission line.

To repair the road, BPA would install two retaining walls on the downslope sides of the access road to prevent further degradation that could block access to the lines for future maintenance and operation. The Mechanically Stabilized Earth (MSE) walls would measure approximately 10 feet high and 48 feet in length in one location and 60 feet in length in the other location. After the MSE wall installations, the access road bed would be returned to a pre-slide width of about 16 feet to allow for transmission line operation and maintenance vehicle access. The MSE retaining walls would be faced with gabion baskets made with non-galvanized (black wire) steel and filled with locally-sourced rocks. The non-galvanized steel would naturally rust after exposure to weather, blending into the natural earth tones. The gabion wire would be designed for an 80-year corrosion life.

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/ Katey Grange

Katey Grange

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: January 11, 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.

Proposed Action: Bonneville-Hood River and Knight-Ostrander Access Road Repair

Project Site Description

The slide repair locations are located about 0.3 mile south of the Bonneville Dam on US Forest Service-managed lands within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. The access road repair areas are located mid slope with recently (2017) burnt, forested tree vegetation on both sides. Ground cover has started to reestablish in the project area. The access road itself consists of a graveled, established road prism.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> The project work area had been previously surveyed for a similar action and no cultural resources were identified within the Area of Potential Effect (APE). As a result of the previous survey result and consultation for the similar actions, BPA made a no effect determination for this project.		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Temporary disturbance of soils and rock would occur as the slope is cut back to install the retaining walls. After project completion, the access road would be more stable than pre-project conditions.		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Up to one non-burnt, living maple tree may need to be removed to facilitate retaining wall installation. BPA does not anticipate the need to clear additional living trees. Low-growing vegetation would be disturbed during project installation. Ground disturbance areas outside of the road prism and retaining wall footprint would be revegetated with a native seed mix as appropriate. The access road was surveyed in 2015 to identify gorge endemic species and US Forest Service sensitive plant species. No sensitive plant species, including Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed species, were identified in the project area.		
4. Wildlife (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> The access road was surveyed in 2015 to identify gorge endemic species and US Forest Service sensitive species. No sensitive wildlife species, including ESA-listed species or eagle nests, were identified in the project area. The project area would be surveyed for nesting eagles prior to the start of work. If nesting eagles are identified near project area, work would occur outside of the eagle nesting period of Jan 1 st to August 31 st .		
5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including federal/state special-status species and ESUs)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Explanation: No waterbodies are located within or near the project work areas.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: No wetlands are located within the project work areas.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: Spill prevention measures would be employed during construction activities. Project would not result in any groundwater withdrawals nor provide a pathway for groundwater contamination.

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

Explanation: Both repair locations would be located on US Forest Service-managed lands and within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA). One repair location is within the designated Cascade Locks Urban Area that is exempt from CRGNSA regulations. The other portion of the road repair would occur on lands designated as Special Management Area (SMA) Open Space under the CRGNSA Management Plan. Because the planned activity in the SMA Open Space designation would be in support of existing transmission facility operation and maintenance, the activity falls under the savings provision for BPA transmission facilities that is contained in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act of 1986 (Act). As falling under the savings provision, the activity would be exempt from management plan consistency review under the Act.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: Being located mid slope with trees on both sides of the work area, the repair sites are not visible to nearby key viewing areas (KVAs). The MSE retaining walls would rust and the rocks would match local materials to minimize any visual dissonance to casual users of the access road.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: Temporary dust and emissions would be generated during project construction.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: Temporary noise would be generated during project construction during daylight hours and during the work week. The project would be located near I-84 and railroad tracks that generate elevated ambient background noise.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: Standard construction safety measures would be employed to reduce work hazards. Repair of the access road would allow BPA to maintain the reliability of the transmission lines.

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:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: BPA realty staff have worked with the US Forest Service to obtain any necessary authorizations to conduct the work.

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

Signed: /s/ Katey Grange
Katey Grange, ECT-4
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: January 11, 2019