

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Chenoweth-Goldendale No. 1 and Big Eddy-Quenett Creek No. 1&2, Wood Pole Replacement (Update to previous categorical exclusion issued on October 30, 2019)

PP&A Project No.: 4221

Project Manager: Michael Wellner – TELP-TPP-1

Location: Wasco County, Oregon

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 replace deteriorating wood-pole structures (including, cross arms, insulators, guy anchors, etc.) on the Chenoweth-Goldendale No. 1 (structures 1/6 and 1/7), Big Eddy-Quenett Creek No. 1 (structure 7/1), and Big Eddy-Quenett Creek No. 2 (structure 6/9 and 7/1) transmission lines. Replacement would be in-kind and would utilize the existing holes where possible to minimize ground disturbance. Structure 7/1 on the Big Eddy-Quenett Creek No. 2 may move up to 50 feet southeast on top of rocky ledge. If necessary, an auger would be used to remove any loose soil from the existing hole prior to new wood pole placement.

Improvements to landings and access roads would be required to allow for safe working conditions. Access road improvements would consist of improving access to landings and widening the shoulder of a bike trail in two isolated locations to allow for an adequate vehicle turn radius. No unauthorized construction activities would occur in any water body including streams, ponds, or wetlands.

Heavy equipment would be used to conduct the work and may include a pole truck, dump truck, backhoe, crane, bucket truck, and a small bull dozer. Equipment and materials would be staged only in designated areas. Once work is completed all equipment and debris would be removed from the project area and areas with ground disturbance outside of the road prism would be restored.

The project 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.

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/ Fred Walasavage

Fred Walasavage

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer – EC-4

Date: November 1, 2019

Attachment(s):

Environmental Checklist

Effects Determination for T&E Species

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: Chenoweth-Goldendale No. 1 and Big Eddy-Quenett Creek No. 1&2, Wood Pole Replacement (Update to previous categorical exclusion issued on October 30, 2019)

Project Site Description

The project activities would be conducted on BPA transmission line rights-of-way. The property is owned by the U.S. Corps of Engineers and is managed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. The project area is mostly flat with slightly elevated rock outcrops. A paved recreation trail bisects the project area. Vegetation primarily consists of grasses and steppe shrubs. Taylor Lake is situated within 50 yards to the south of the bike trail and east of the poles to be replaced. The Columbia River is located approximately 100 yards to the north of the project area.

Transmission Line/ROW	Structure #	Township	Range	Section	County, State	Ownership/Landuse
Chenoweth-Goldendale No.1	1/6, 1/7	02N	13E	38	Wasco, OR	U.S. Corps of Engineers/Wildlife Management Area
Big Eddy-Quenett Creek No. 1	7/1					
Big Eddy-Quenett Creek No. 2	6/9, 7/1					

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



Explanation: On September 26, 2019, BPA sent its Determination of Effect letter for the undertaking to Oregon SHPO, interested tribes, and consulting parties, with a determination of no adverse effect. As per 36 CFR 800.5(c)(1), after the close of the 30 day review period, the Oregon SHPO has not provided a response. The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Nez Perce, and Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon were consulted. The Nez Perce Tribe responded that they expect any work will be monitored and any impacts limited in scope. No other responses were received.

Note:

- A tribal monitor would be required for all construction activities. Inadvertent discovery form should be provided and explained to the road contractor. In the event of an inadvertent discovery, work would immediately cease and the SHPO and BPA archaeologist would be notified.

2. **Geology and Soils**



Explanation: The project would require minimal ground-disturbing activities. No prime or unique farmlands would be affected.

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



Explanation: There are no special-status, including Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed, species within the project area. Vegetation removal would include some small willows and woody vegetation along the paved recreation trail to be used for vehicle access. Disturbed areas outside of the roadways, landings, and 15 feet from the poles would be reseeded.

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



Explanation: No special-status, including Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed, species and habitats were identified within the project area. No suitable habitat is present in project area for listed wildlife species. Wildlife in the project area would experience temporary disturbance associated with elevated noise levels and construction vehicle presence. The project area is on and adjacent to land managed by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Dalles District Biologist reviewed the project scope and had no wildlife concerns given the extent and short duration of the project.

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



Explanation: None present in project area. BMPs would be used to prevent erosion from entering any nearby waterbodies.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: None present in project area. BMPs would be used to prevent erosion from entering any nearby wetlands

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: No contact with groundwater. The proposed work is in an upland area; maximum depth of disturbance would be about 10 feet below ground surface.

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



Explanation: The paved recreational trail would be used to provide for project vehicle access and would temporarily disrupt recreational use. Trail use restrictions would be in place during the weekdays for a period of approximately two weeks. The trail would be open on the weekend assuming there are no safety hazards resulting from the project.

The project would be located within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA). Because the planned activities in the CRGNSA 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.

No long-term changes in land use would occur and no other specially-designated areas were identified.

Note:

- BPA would give advance notification of construction dates and provide for proper signage and closure measures during construction.
- BPA would also replace all damaged asphalt surfaces.
- BPA would restore areas where vegetation removal along the trail was required.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: New wood poles would be similar to existing structures and would not be noticeably different than existing structures. Landings and access roads would be kept to a tight footprint to minimize visual impacts.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Any fugitive dust or similar during project implementation is expected to be temporary and minimal.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Construction noise would be temporary and localized.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: Project activities would not impact human health or safety. The proposed action 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.

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

- 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.

- 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.

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

The landowner (US Army Corps of Engineers) has been notified by the BPA Realty Specialist on various dates through on-going correspondences. Further, the Northern Wasco County Parks & Recreation and Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife have been notified and BPA will continue coordination through construction.

Upon finalization of this CX, BPA will provide a copy to the Corps of Engineers as the underlying landowner.

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

Signed: /s/ Fred Walasavage
Fred Walasavage
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: November 1, 2019