

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: UEC Land Use Review Request at Imeques Acclimation Facility

Project Manager: Heidi Haserot – TERR-3

Location: Umatilla County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B.1.24 Property Transfers

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to modify an existing Umatilla Electric Cooperative (UEC) right-of-way easement in two locations across BPA fee-owned land at the Imeques Acclimation Facility in Umatilla County, Oregon. The modified easement would allow UEC to replace an aboveground electric distribution line with a buried line.

UEC would bury conductor in a single conduit for about 70 feet in the existing 25-foot-wide easement. In the second location UEC would remove about 700 feet of overhead conductor and replace the conductor in a conduit for about 130 feet in a new easement. Two existing service line poles would be replaced in or near their current location.

To bury the line, UEC would remove the poles located on BPA fee-owned lands by excavating around the base and fully removing the pole. The conduit would then be buried in a 4-foot-deep by 2-foot-wide trench. New service line poles would be located about 10 feet from the removed pole. With the exception of the replaced poles, no aboveground facilities would remain in the easement after completion.

No pulling, staging, or access areas would be needed outside of the easement area. Ground disturbance areas would be restored to pre-project contours and revegetated. No tree clearing would be required. Installation is anticipated to occur in fall 2019.

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), 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/ W. Walker Stinnette
W. Walker Stinnette
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist

Salient CRGT

Reviewed by:

/s/ Chad J. Hamel
Chad J. Hamel
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange Date: November 20, 2019
Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

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 site is located on BPA fee-owned property on the Umatilla Indian Reservation in Umatilla County, Oregon (Section 29, Township 3 North, Range 36 East). Access to the project site, which is located along the north side of Bingham Road, is restricted by a barbed wire fence and locked access gate. The project site is located on a relatively flat, floodplain terrace associated with the Umatilla River. Xerofluvents, or alluvial soils that reflect repeated flood events within otherwise dry environments, are the primary soil type mapped within the project site. Currently, the project site is maintained as an electrical transmission right-of-way with low-growing herbaceous species. A juvenile fish acclimation and release facility, a satellite facility associated with the Umatilla Fish Hatchery, is located outside of the project site on the BPA property. The surrounding area is primarily undeveloped coniferous forest and grassland with a few rural residential properties located south of the project site along Bingham Road. The closest surface water is the Umatilla River, which is located with 250 feet of the project site.

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"/>

Explanation: BPA initiated Section 106 consultation under the National Historic Preservation Act on June 17, 2019 with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) and the CTUIR Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO) as the project area of potential Effects (APE) is located on lands owned by BPA within the exterior boundaries of the CTUIR Reservation.

On November 4, 2019, the BPA archaeologist determined that the proposed undertaking would have no effect on historic properties (§36 CFR 800.4[d][1]) as long as a cultural resources monitor was present for all ground-disturbing activities taking place on BPA-owned lands. On November 18, 2019, the CTUIR THPO concurred with the BPA archaeologist's determination.

Should cultural materials be encountered during the implementation of the project, work shall halt, and the stipulations of BPA's Inadvertent Discovery Protocol should be followed. The BPA archaeologist should be notified immediately.

2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Explanation: Minor soil compaction would occur due to vehicle and equipment use. Removing and replacing the existing service line poles and burying a new electric distribution line would require soil excavation. Excavated soils would be temporarily stored on-site, backfilled, and graded to original contours following installation of the new cable. UEC and its delegates would implement best management practices (BMPs) to address temporary erosion and sediment control.

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



Explanation: Project-related activities (e.g., vehicle and equipment use, service line pole removal and replacement, and trenching) would result in removal of vegetative cover in small areas where vegetation is present. No additional tree or vegetation removal is proposed. There are no documented occurrences of any state special-status plant species or plant species protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) near the project site. The project site does not contain habitat suitable for protected plant species. Therefore, the proposed project would have no effect on protected plant species.

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



Explanation: The project site is within the range of two gray wolf (*Canis lupis*) packs and an additional pair of gray wolves. It is therefore possible that gray wolves could be intermittently present near the project site. Although gray wolves are not listed under the Federal ESA in this region of Oregon and are no longer listed under the Oregon Endangered Species Act anywhere in the state, the species is still considered a special-status mammal and is protected and managed under the Oregon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan.

During construction, minor and temporary disruption of normal wolf and other wildlife behavior could occur from elevated noise and human activity. However, the proposed project would be short in duration and would not involve permanent alteration of suitable habitat for gray wolves or their prey. The proposed project would involve temporary noise and activity levels similar in nature to those that already occur at or near the site. There are no documented occurrences of any other state special-status wildlife species of wildlife species protected under the Federal ESA, and no such species or suitable habitat are expected to occur at the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would have no effect on protected wildlife species.

If any active nests are found on the service line poles to be removed, the project would be delayed until the nests are unoccupied.

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



Explanation: The Umatilla River is rearing, spawning, and migration habitat for three fish species listed as Threatened under the Federal ESA: bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), and chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*). Pacific lamprey (*Entosphenus tridentatus*) a Species of Concern under the Federal ESA, is also found in the river. The river has been designated as critical habitat for bull trout and steelhead trout.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has determined that portions of the project site are in an area that has a 1% chance of being inundated by a flood in any given year, also known as the 100-year flood zone. The project site is in Zone AO (depth 1 foot), a Special Flood Hazard Area with possible sheet flow, ponding, or shallow flooding up to 1-foot deep.

All project-related activities would be conducted in upland areas, and no instream work or removal of riparian vegetation is proposed as part of this project. UEC and its delegates would implement BMPs to address erosion and sediment control, spill management, and site stabilization to prevent transport of sediment and/or hazardous materials off-site to the Umatilla River. UEC would be responsible for ensuring that structural components (i.e., the new service line poles) would be flood-proofed to 1-foot depth and would be able to resist hydrostatic and hydrodynamic loads and the effects of buoyancy. Therefore, the proposed project would have no effect on water bodies, floodplains, or Federal or state special-status fish species.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: No wetlands are present in the project site. Riverine wetlands and freshwater forested and shrub wetlands associated with the Umatilla River are mapped within approximately 150 feet of the site. UEC and its delegates would implement BMPs to address erosion and sediment control, spill management, and site stabilization to prevent transport of sediment and/or hazardous materials off-site into any nearby wetlands.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: Given the close proximity of the site to the Umatilla River, soil excavation could reach depths to groundwater. UEC and its delegates would implement BMPs to reduce the potential for inadvertent spills of hazardous materials that could enter groundwater or aquifers. Therefore, the proposed project would have no impact on groundwater or aquifers.

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



Explanation: The project site is located within the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. There would be no change to land use at the project site.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: Replacing an existing above ground electric distribution line with a buried line and relocating service line poles would have little change on the visual quality of the area.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Temporary dust and vehicle emissions would increase in the local area during construction. There would be no long-term changes in air quality following completion of the project.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Construction noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise would not change significantly from current ambient conditions.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: No impacts to human health and safety are expected as a result of 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:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: The project site is on BPA fee-owned property. Adjacent landowners and ROW easement lessees would be notified of the upcoming project by BPA. Additionally, the Land Use Agreement would direct UEC to coordinate with landowners.

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

Signed: /s/ W. Walker Stinnette Date: November 20, 2019
W. Walker Stinnette – EC-4
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient CRGT