

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Colville-Republic No. 1 Access Road Improvement Project

PP&A No.: 2379

Project Manager: Todd Wehner

Location: Ferry and Stevens counties, 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 repair or improve approximately 18.25 miles and construct approximately 600 linear feet of access road along the Colville-Republic No. 1 transmission line from structures 15/1-43/3. Proposed road work would include blading, shaping, grading, brushing, mowing, and placing surface rock on new and existing road prisms to ensure safe access to structures.

In addition, the proposed work would include the construction of one 40 x 60 foot (ft.) transmission tower landing, stabilizing a landslide area utilizing cut and fill techniques, installation of one 16 x 50 ft. precast concrete bridge, abandoning a ford by installing a gate or other barriers to eliminate access, installation of 7 cross-drain culverts and other drainage features such as ditches, water bars, and drain dips. General equipment used for this type of road maintenance includes: graders, rollers, bull-dozers, brush hogs, excavators, and dump trucks.

Along the approximately 28-mile-long project area, construction is expected to take several months with work at any one site expected to last between three to five days. No staging areas have been identified at this time, but any necessary additional work sites such as staging areas would undergo environmental and cultural review prior to use.

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/ Laura Roberts
Laura Roberts
Biological Scientist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange
Katey Grange
NEPA Compliance Office

Date: January 10, 2020

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: Colville-Republic No. 1 Access Road Improvement Project

Project Site Description

The proposed project area is located in northeastern Washington and consists of predominantly second growth forest heavily managed for timber. Because of the steepness of the terrain, drainages along the project are mostly ephemeral with only a few exhibiting stream characteristics such as beds and banks. See Table below, for Township, Range, Section Number, and Ownership information.

| Township | Range | Section | Ownership/Manager |
|----------|-------|------------------------|---|
| 36N | 33E | 3,4 | Private |
| 36N | 34E | 5,6,8,9,14,15,16,23,24 | Private, Colville National Forest, Washington Department of Natural Resources |
| 36N | 35E | 9,13-19,24,39-42 | Colville National Forest |
| 36N | 36E | 19,25-29,34,35,52 | Colville National Forest |
| 36N | 37E | 11,14,15,22,27-30 | Private, Washington Department of Natural Resources |
| 37N | 33E | 32-35 | Private |

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: Following a review of the potential project impacts to cultural resources, BPA has determined that this undertaking would have No Adverse Effect to historic properties.

BPA conducted cultural resource field surveys for the proposed project. BPA sent a Letter of Determination of No Adverse Effect with the stipulation of archaeological monitoring and site avoidance to the Washington SHPO on October 1, 2019. Concurrently, determination letters were sent to the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington Department of State Lands, and the Colville National Forest. BPA received final concurrence from SHPO on November 26, 2019.

Note: The following minimization measures would be implemented.

- Any necessary additional work sites such as staging areas would obtain Section 106 Concurrence prior to use.
- The proposed project would implement archaeological monitoring and site avoid measures as stipulated in the letter of determination.

2. Geology and Soils



Explanation: Soils would be disturbed primarily for the installation of the bridge and new access road. Minimal new ground disturbance outside of these areas is anticipated. Predominantly, ground disturbing activities would occur on existing access roads and subsequently rocked.

Note: The following minimization measures would be implemented.

- During construction all appropriate Best Management Practices (BMP) would be used to implement site specific erosion and sediment control. All disturbed areas would be stabilized and seeded.

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



Explanation: Vegetation would be disturbed for the installation of the new project components and minimal disturbance to vegetation is anticipated where existing roads would be repaired and improved. There would be no effect to ESA-listed plant species. No impacts to state sensitive plant species or Forest Service sensitive plant species are anticipated. In order to fix a landslide area, approximately 20 trees of approximately 12 inch, or less, Diameter at Breast Height, either standing or fallen, would be removed.

In order to limit the spread of invasive terrestrial plants and minimize fire danger on National Forest System lands managed by Colville National Forest, BPA would comply with the *Standard Operating Procedures for limiting the spread of invasive species and fire prevention as directed in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA)*.

Note: The following minimization measures would be implemented to minimize vegetation impacts.

- Drive on existing access roads
- Reduce work area footprint to the least necessary to safely do the work
- Stabilize and seed with a geographic and climate-appropriate seed mix approved by the landowner
- Utilize erosion and sediment control materials composed of certified weed free materials

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



Explanation: The project would have minimal impact to wildlife and habitat related to temporary disturbance associated with elevated noise and human presence. There project would have no effect to ESA-listed species. No impacts to state sensitive species or Forest Service sensitive species are anticipated.

Note: The following minimization measures would be implemented to minimize impacts to wildlife and their habitat.

- Drive on existing access roads
- Reduce work area footprint to the least necessary to safely do the work
- Stabilize and seeded with a geographic and climate-appropriate seed mix approved by the landowner

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



Explanation: Along an unnamed tributary to Trout Creek, BPA proposes to abandon an existing ford and construct a bridge. The tributary does not contain ESA-listed fish and all work would be conducted from the creek banks, outside the Ordinary High Water Mark. A gate or other barriers would be installed to eliminate access across the ford. The proposed project may have minimal and temporary impacts to ephemeral drainages, such as a short-duration increase in sedimentation, during or after culvert installation.

Note: The following minimization measures would be implemented to prevent sediment or contaminants from reaching any waterbodies.

- Erosion control measures would be implemented to prevent sedimentation from reaching any nearby waterbody.
- Appropriately stocked spill response kits would be located on vehicles, other equipment, and storage yards used on this project.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: No ground disturbing activities are anticipated in wetlands. Erosion control measures would be implemented to prevent sedimentation.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: No impacts to ground water or aquifers are anticipated due to the minimal amount of ground disturbance that would not be deep enough to penetrate groundwater.

Note: The following minimization measures would be implemented to minimize groundwater contamination potential.

- Appropriately stocked spill response kits would be located on vehicles, other equipment, and storage areas.

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



Explanation: No change in land use would occur and project activities would not impact existing land uses.

For those portions of the project crossing the Colville National Forest the *Memorandum of Understanding between the Bonneville Power Administration United States Department of Energy and the United States Forest Service United States Department of Agriculture Regarding Transmission Facilities and Access to Those Facilities on National Forest System Lands Standard Operation Procedures* listed below would be implemented:

- **Section X** Fire control communication and coordination
- **Appendix E** Fire Prevention and Suppression

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The project would have a minimal impact to visual quality. The proposed work is predominantly on existing access roads and would be visually consistent with the existing transmission line corridor. The new bridge would create a slight change to local visual quality, but it would not be significantly different from the surrounding existing transmission line ROW.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: A small amount of vehicle emissions and dust may occur temporarily during construction.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Some temporary construction noise from construction activities would occur during daylight hours.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: No impacts to human, health, and safety are anticipated.

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, environmental, and cultural resource specialist have coordinated the proposed project activities with the Colville National Forest, Department of State Lands, and private landowners.

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

Signed: /s/ Laura Roberts
Laura Roberts - EPI-4
Biological Scientist

Date: January 10, 2020