

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Spring Creek – Wine Country Insulator Replacement Project.

**PP&A No.:** 4392

**Project Manager:** Gerri Colburn - TEPF-CSB-2

**Location:** Yakima and Klickitat counties, Washington

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

**Description of the Proposed Action:** BPA is proposing to replace conductor hardware assemblies, remedy impairments, improve access roads, and install fall protection along the Spring Creek – Wine Country No. 1 transmission line within the Yakima and Klickitat counties, Washington.

Replacement of conductor hardware assemblies (insulators plus hardware) would be performed on 162 towers of the 33-mile-long 230kV Spring Creek – Wine Country No. 1 transmission line. Of these 162 towers, 8 are dead-end towers, 153 are suspension towers, and one of the towers is a transposition tower which includes both dead-end and suspension attachments.

BPA is proposing to remedy multiple impairments on the transmission line. An impairment is an area where the distance from the conductor to the ground surface is inadequate, per National Electrical Safety Code (NESC) standards, resulting in a threat to line reliability and posing a risk to public health and safety. At 3 locations, structures would be relocated which would include excavation and installations of new tower footings. At 30 locations, excavation of the existing ground surface would be required and would consist of removal of approximately 14,700 cubic yards of soil cumulatively and affect a cumulative total of approximately 6.2 acres. At 16 locations, wood pole H-frame prop structures would be installed to raise the conductor away from the ground. Proposed structure relocations would potentially utilize the following type of equipment: line truck, crane, helicopter, and tractor trailer. Proposed excavation work would potentially utilize the following type of equipment: excavator, dump trucks, and backhoe.

In order to provide a safe work environment BPA is proposing to repair approximately 10.5 miles of access roads and construct approximately 0.5 mile of new access roads. Proposed road work would include; blading, shaping, grading, brushing, and placing surface rock on new and existing road prisms. Work would include about 12 new gates, a cross-drain culvert and any necessary drainage features. In addition to the proposed road improvements, work would include; the installation of ten leveled landing areas, consisting of approximately 1 acre

cumulatively. General equipment used for this type of landing work includes: graders, rollers, bull-dozers, brush hogs, excavators, and dump trucks.

In addition BPA would install a cable safety system—the MSA Latchways system— on the vertical climbing path of each transmission tower. The cable system would be connected to the tower with a series of brackets approximately every 10 feet and a top and bottom anchor. Once installed, workers would use the system when climbing the tower by attaching their harness to a specialized pulley which allows them to glide along the safety cable as they climb. Installation would require a line truck and two-to-three workers in the tower and one-to-two workers on the ground.

**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/ Treicia Albert*  
Treicia Albert  
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

*/s/ Katey Grange*  
Katey C. Grange                      Date: September 23, 2021  
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.

**Proposed Action:** Spring Creek – Wine Country Insulator Replacement Project

### **Project Site Description**

The proposed project area is located in south central Washington and traverses a mix of arid rangeland and agricultural lands and spans the Yakima River, as well as multiple perennial, intermittent, and ephemeral waterbodies. Work would occur on privately-owned lands in addition to lands managed by the US Bureau of Land Management, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (Sunnyside Wildlife Area), and the Washington Department of Natural Resources. See Table 1 below for Township, Range, Section Number, and County information.

**Table 1. Township, Range, Section Number and County information.**

<b>Township, Range, Section</b>	<b>County, State</b>
T6N R19E Section 24, 25, 26	Klickitat, WA
T6N R20E Section 3, 4, 8, 9, 17, 18, 19	Klickitat, WA
T7N R20E Section 34, 35, 36,	Yakima, WA
T7N R21E Section 12, 13, 14, 21, 22, 23, 28, 29, 30, 31	Yakima, WA
T7N R22E Section 5, 6, 7	Yakima, WA
T8N R22E Section 13, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 32, 33	Yakima, WA
T8N R23E Section 6, 7, 18	Yakima, WA
T9N R23E Section 4, 5, 8, 17, 20, 29, 32	Yakima, WA

### **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

#### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), the Confederated Tribes and Bands of Yakama Nation (YN), the Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District (SVID), US Bureau of Land Management, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), on November 4, 2019. DAHP provided concurrence with the Area of Potential Effect (APE) via a letter dated November 7, 2019, the SVID responded on November 21, 2019 providing a map of their canals, and the YN provided concurrence with the APE on November 20, 2019. BPA sent a no adverse effect to historic properties determination on March 9, 2021 and DAHP concurred on

April 20, 2021, and the YN provided concurrence on August 4, 2021. No additional response was received within 30 days.

Notes:

- Flagging would be used at sites 45KL943, 45KL994, 45KL963 to restrict vehicle access to avoid sites.
- Site 45YA962 would be flagged off.
- A cultural resources monitor would be present during all work around structure 9/1 of the Spring Creek-Wine-Country No. 1 transmission line.

## 2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Soils would be disturbed primarily for new access road, landings, and impairment fixes, prior to being rockered or restored with vegetation.

Notes: 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.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: A total of about 7 acres of vegetation would be disturbed for landings and impairment fixes, with additional disturbance in new access road work areas. A minimal disturbance to vegetation would be anticipated where existing roads would be repaired and improved. There would be no effect to ESA-listed plant species. No impacts to state or other sensitive species are anticipated.

Notes: 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)

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project would have minimal impact to wildlife and habitat related to temporary disturbance associated with ground disturbance, elevated noise, and human presence. The project crosses a 159-acre parcel of the Vance-Ferry Road Unit of the Sunnyside/Snake River Wildlife Area an area primarily funded by BPA as mitigation for the Columbia River power system and managed by WDFW. The parcel consists primarily of agriculture fields and border habitat. The latchway system would be installed on two structures, 28/5 and 29/1, located on the parcel and would require mowing of approximately 500 feet of existing access. The impact to any wildlife in this area would be temporary and would likely last only a day.

The project would have no effect to ESA-listed species. No impacts to state special-status species or habitats are anticipated.

Notes: 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)**

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: There would be no ground disturbing activities in any river, stream, or other waterbody along the project and no riparian vegetation would be impacted. The project would have no effect to ESA-listed fish species. No impacts to state or other sensitive species are anticipated.

Notes: 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 or dust.
- Appropriately stocked spill response kits would be located on vehicles and landing zones used on this project.

## **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

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

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to ground water or aquifers are anticipated as the ground disturbance would not be deep enough to penetrate groundwater.

Notes: 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**

Potential for Significance: No

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

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would have a minor impact to visual quality due primarily to the new roads and landings, and impairment fixes, as these would be new components to the transmission line ROW. This change would not be substantial and would be visually consistent with the existing transmission line corridor.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

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

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

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

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

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: N/A

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

Explanation: N/A

**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: N/A

**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: N/A

**Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Description: BPA realty and environment staff have coordinated the proposed project activities with underlying private landowners and public land managers.

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

Signed: */s/ Treicia Albert*

Treicia Albert – EPR -4  
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: September 23, 2021