

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Bertelsen – Willow Creek #1 Structure 1/4 & 1/6 Urgent Replacement Project

PP&A No.: 4,804

Project Manager: Rusty Ludt, TELP-TPP-1

Location: Lane County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B 1.3 Routine Maintenance

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA owns and operates the 115 kV Bertelsen – Willow Creek No. 1 high voltage transmission line, which runs from Bertelsen Substation approximately three miles south to Willow Creek Substation, in the western extent of the Eugene metro area, in the Willamette Valley, Oregon. BPA's transmission line maintenance (TLM) crews have identified two structures along the line that are in need of urgent replacement. Wood pole structure 1/4 has significant pole rot, and wood pole structure 1/6 has a cavity. These pole defects pose a risk to the transmission line's safety and reliability. BPA proposes to replace these wood pole structures in-kind with 65 ft. wood poles. Work would be completed by BPA TLM crews, and equipment would include transmission line bucket trucks, equipment trailers, and light-duty trucks. Both structures are located in paved parking lots, so ground disturbance would be limited to the specific structure locations. All material staging areas would be located on paved areas. The urgent structure replacement would occur in the spring of 2022.

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/ Aaron Siemers

Aaron Siemers, EPR-4

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel Date: April 27, 2022

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 Bertelsen-Willow Creek #1 transmission line runs along the western extent of the City of Eugene metro area, in the Willamette Valley, OR. The topography is relatively flat, with fertile soils. Historically, the region grew forests of ash, black cottonwood, alder, and big leaf maple in the flood plain of the Willamette River and its tributaries. Today, most of the land has been converted to agricultural, rural residential, sub-urban, and urban development.

In the project location, the Bertelsen-Willow Creek #1 line shares the transmission corridor with the Eugene-Alvey No. 2 line. The Bertelsen-Willow Creek #1 line is supported by wood pole structures, and the Eugene-Alvey No. 2 line is supported by steel monopoles. The corridor is approximately 150 ft. wide. The transmission corridor runs through suburban, light industrial, and commercial land use. Structure 1/4 is located in a parking lot of a commercial building, and structure 1/6 is located in a planting strip within a parking lot of a different commercial building.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA archaeological staff have reviewed the project scope and location and determined that the undertaking does not have the potential to cause effect to historic properties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The new wood pole structures 1/4 and 1/6 would be installed in the same locations as the existing wood pole structures. No significant excavation of soil or rock is anticipated.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance is planned outside of the immediate wood pole locations. Some standard commercially available landscaping bushes and plants near structure 1/6 in the parking lot planting strip would be removed. No special-status state-listed plant species would be impacted by project activities.

Per Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, BPA obtained an official species list for the project area from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on April 26, 2022. BPA determined that the project would have “No Effect” on Kincaid’s lupine and Willamette daisy.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Given the project location, the project would not significantly increase disturbance to wildlife beyond typical background levels. No special-status species, including state-listed species, would be impacted by the project activities.

Per Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, BPA obtained an official species list for the project area from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on April 26, 2022. BPA determined that the project would have “No Effect” on marbled murrelet, northern spotted owl, streaked horned lark, Fender’s blue butterfly, Taylor’s checkerspot, and the candidate species monarch butterfly.

No designated critical habitat is present in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No waterbodies are present in or near the project area.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present in or near the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Excavation on the project would not occur at depths that would impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Except for short-term impacts during the actual pole replacement construction work, current land use, which consists of commercial building parking, would not be impacted by the project. The project is not located in a specially-designated area.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project consists of replacement in-kind of wood pole transmission structures, and therefore, would not impact the existing visual profile of the area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During construction, some short term, relatively insignificant impacts to air quality would occur due to vehicle use.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During construction, short term, ambient noise levels may rise due to work at the structure sites. Noise increase would be temporary and relatively insignificant.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA's TLM crews would follow all standard safety practices prior to and during work on the transmission line, including a pre-construction job hazard analysis and safety meeting. Replacement of the two structures would reduce risk to the safety and reliability of the Bertelsen-Willow Creek #1 transmission line.

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 would coordinate the construction schedule with the underlying landowners and all other stakeholders in the project area.

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

Signed: /s/ Aaron Siemers

Aaron Siemers, EPR-4

Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: April 27, 2022