

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: L0463 Columbia River PUD Deer Island Interconnection

Project No.: L0463

Project Manager: Michael Beyer, TEPL-TPP-1

Location: Columbia County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine maintenance, B1.7 Electronic Equipment, B4.11 Electric power substations and interconnection facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to interconnect Columbia River Public Utilities District (CRPUD) newly constructed Deer Island substation to BPA's existing 115-kV St. Helens-Allston transmission line between structures 7/4 and 7/5. BPA's proposed action to support the interconnection request consists of installing a tap facility to connect CRPUD's transmission line to BPA's grid, along with minimal substation and communication upgrades at CRPUD's substation, including installation of three revenue meters at CRPUD's substations and one small antenna mounted to CRPUD's new Deer Island Substation control house.

For the tap installation, the existing 3-pole wooden transmission structure (structure 7/5) would be removed and replaced due to exceeded service life of the structure. This existing structure is 60-foot-tall and would be replaced with a new 60-foot-tall wooden 3-pole structure, in the same location. The new poles would be installed 8-feet-below-grade. Three existing guy wires would be replaced and would be attached to the existing below-ground plate anchors. A 50-foot-long by 20 foot-wide landing would be installed at the base of the new 7/5 structure, for safe access during construction and for future maintenance activities.

Approximately 100-feet-southeast of the 3-pole-structure replacement (7/5), BPA would install two 3-pole-wooden H-frame structures, two switch stands, and two 40-foot-long by 40-foot-wide landings at either side of the point of interconnection on BPA's existing right-of-way (ROW).

To support the construction, 225 feet of the existing access road would be improved. The access road would be graded, followed by adding base rock and surface rock (gravel) to the road. Approximately 475 feet of the existing access road in the ROW would be realigned to accommodate the new tap structure. The realigned road would be constructed approximately 10 feet west of the existing road. A vehicle turnaround location would also be installed within the ROW.

Staging of equipment and materials would be on the existing ROW between structures 7/4 and 7/5 on the St. Helens-Allston transmission line.

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/ Beth Belanger

Beth Belanger
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel February 21, 2023

Sarah T. Biegel Date
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment: 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 location is located in Columbia County, Oregon, approximately 2 miles northwest of Columbia City. The project area is in Section 7 and 18 of Township 5 North, Range 1 West. The access road and right-of-way are on a hillside that slopes to the south. One single-family residence is located immediately adjacent to the right-of-way, approximately 200 feet north of the project area. A tree farm is located to the immediate west of the ROW.

Vegetation in the right-of-way and along the access road consists of non-native hawkweeds (*Hieracium* spp.), Queen Anne's lace (*Dacus carota*), bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*), sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*), stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*), reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), and other non-native grasses.

An unnamed perennial stream is located 0.14 miles northwest of the project location. Just over 0.50 miles to the east is Deer Island Slough, located adjacent to the Columbia River.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On September 13, 2022, BPA initiated Section 106 consultation with the following entities: Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, Cowlitz Indian Tribe, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, and Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). BPA did not receive any responses to the initiation letters within 30 days. A BPA archaeologist then proceeded with background research and an archaeological survey of the project area.

The St. Helens-Allston No. 1 line meets the minimum eligibility standards for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. BPA determined that the proposed action would not adversely affect the integrity of the line and that the implementation of the proposed undertaking would have no adverse effect to historic properties. BPA sent the survey report and determination letters to all of the consulting parties on December 1, 2022. To date, no responses have been received.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minimal soil disturbance would occur. For the transmission structure replacement, the new wood poles would be installed in the same holes that the previous poles were embedded in, or within 5 to 10 feet of the existing location. Excavated soils would be used to backfill the new pole locations. The new switch stand footings would be installed to a

depth of four-feet deep. Grading would occur to install new landings around the switch stands and to improve the existing access roads.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some permanent vegetation loss would occur where the new landings are installed. Disturbed areas would be re-vegetated following construction. The location does not have any Federal or special-status species or habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project location is within and adjacent to an existing transmission right-of-way, which does not have high quality habitat. Some species may temporarily avoid the area during construction. There are no Federal or special-status species or habitats that would be impacted by the project.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no water bodies, floodplains, or fish present in the project area; therefore, there would be no effects to these resources.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands present within the project area; therefore, there would be no effects to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is five miles west of the Troutdale Aquifer System. Ground excavation for the project would be minimal and would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not result in any land use changes. There are no specially-designated areas near the project location.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The new structure would be similar in height and the new switch stands would not be visible from the surrounding area. The project would not result in any significant changes to the visual quality of the area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions would occur during construction; however, there would be no substantial changes to air quality during or after construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise would not change substantially.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During project activities, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Project activities would not impact human health or safety. Access road improvements and installation of landings at the switch stands would improve the overall safety for transmission line workers maintaining the infrastructure.

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 staff would notify the underlying landowner and the adjacent landowner of the construction schedule. No other notifications would be required for the project.

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

Signed: <u>/s/ Beth Belanger</u>	<u>February 21, 2023</u>
Beth Belanger	Date
Environmental Protection Specialist	