

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Northern Wasco County PUD Service Line Replacement

Project No.: 20230314

Project Manager: Brent Leslie, TERR-Redmond

Location: Wasco County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow Northern Wasco County PUD (PUD) to remove a segment of the PUD's line and pole that provides service to BPA tower 1/3 on the Big Eddy-Spring Creek No. 1 transmission line and install a new line and pole in a new location to improve service to the BPA tower. The project location is located northwest of the Big Eddy Substation near The Dalles, Oregon.

The PUD would remove approximately 350 feet of old line from PUD poles 29 and 30 located between East 2nd Street and BPA tower 1/3. Pole 29 would remain in place and Pole 30 would be cut off at the base. Access to Pole 30 would be via the existing BPA access roads with a gravel base. Access to Pole 29 would be by foot. The new PUD service line would be located between Columbia View Drive and BPA tower 1/3. Approximately 220 feet of new wire would be installed by hand between the existing PUD line on the south side of Columbia View Drive and BPA tower 1/3 with one new wooden pole (Pole 15A) installed within the Columbia View Drive road right-of-way (ROW). The new pole would be installed by auguring a hole resulting in a small, localized area of ground disturbance. Access to BPA tower 1/3 would be via an existing access road to the tower. Ground disturbance would primarily occur from the installation of Pole 15A with minor ground disturbance occurring at Pole 30 from cutting down the pole. All other access to work areas would be by foot.

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/ Jeremy Doschka

Jeremy Doschka
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange Date
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 ROW near structure 1/3 on the Big Eddy-Spring Creek No. 1 transmission line corridor east of The Dalles, Wasco County, Oregon (Section 31, Township 2 North, Range 14 East). The site is situated on a low plateau and adjacent slope above the Columbia River with vegetation consisting of grasses, forbs, weeds, and shrubs. No wetlands or water bodies are present within or immediately adjacent to the project site. All work areas are located within a designated Urban Area of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA).

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with a determination of no historic properties affected on December 13, 2023 (BPA CR Project No.: OR 2023 169), with the stipulation that an archaeological monitor be present for ground disturbing activities. Consulting parties included the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Concurrence was received from the SHPO on January 2, 2024 (SHPO Case No. 23-1721). No other comments were received.

Notes:

- Northern Wasco PUD would need to provide a cultural resources monitor, in coordination with BPA's cultural lead, for any ground disturbing construction activities.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Localized soil disturbance would occur from auguring a hole during the new pole installation work in the Columbia View Drive ROW (Pole 15A). Some additional minor, localized ground disturbance would also occur at Pole 30 during cutting of the pole. BPA would require that Northern Wasco County PUD implement standard construction erosion control measures, as necessary.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status plant species or suitable habitat for special-status plant species are present within the project site. Grassy vegetation would be cleared from around the pole removal and installation locations prior to the start of work. Disturbance to vegetation is

anticipated to be limited to a small area around the auger hole and revegetation would occur naturally in the disturbed area. Grasses, forbs, weeds, and shrubs could also be crushed from vehicles and equipment accessing the project site.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary wildlife disturbance could occur from construction noise; however, wildlife species that could be present in the area would likely be habituated to noise in this area given surrounding land uses. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status wildlife species project site, and no suitable special-status species habitat is present.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No water bodies or special-status fish species are present within the project site, and the project site is not located within a floodplain. During construction, BPA would require that Northern Wasco County PUD implement standard construction erosion control measures, as necessary to prevent indirect impacts to off-site waterbodies, floodplains, special-status fish species, and habitats. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies, floodplains, fish, or fish habitat.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands located within or immediately adjacent to the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No use of groundwater proposed and excavation would not extend to a depth that would intersect groundwater. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would be consistent with current land use. The project site is located in a designated Urban Area of the CRGNSA, which means the project would be exempt from compliance with CRGNSA requirements, including those contained in the CRGNSA Management Plan.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be performed within existing transmission line rights-of-way. During construction, the presence of construction equipment and minor vegetation disturbance, would cause temporary visual impacts. Replacement poles and service line would be consistent with the view shed of the area as there are existing overhead lines and a substation in the area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have a small, temporary impact on air quality from a small amount of vehicle emissions and dust generated during construction. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the proposed action.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No or No with Conditions

Explanation: The proposed action would produce intermittent and temporary construction-related noise at levels greater than current ambient conditions, which could be audible from nearby residential properties. Noise impacts would be temporary and would only occur during daylight hours (approximately 7 AM to 7 PM). There would be no long-term change in ambient noise following completion of the proposed action.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities would not impact human health or safety. The proposed action would provide more reliable service to a warning beacon located on a BPA tower.

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: All proposed work would occur on BPA fee-owned property. No landowner notification, involvement, or coordination would be required.

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

Signed: /s/ Jeremy Doschka
Jeremy Doschka
Environmental Protection Specialist

1/23/2024
Date