

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Driveway and Utilities Installations on North Bonneville-Midway No. 1 Right-of-Way

**Project No.:** LURR-20210309

**Project Manager:** Ryan Tanner, TERR-3

**Location:** Skamania County, Washington

**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 a private landowner to install a new gravel driveway and underground water and electric service lines on BPA fee-owned right-of-way (ROW) between structures 9/6 and 10/1 on the North Bonneville-Midway No. 1 transmission line in Carson, Skamania County, Washington (Township 3 North, Range 8 East, Section 29). The landowner would clear grass and shrubs and grade to install an approximately 200-foot-long and 12-foot-wide gravel driveway extending in a “U” shape from Oak Street at the southern edge of the BPA property to an existing gravel road. The landowner would also excavate an approximately 100-foot-long and 3-foot deep trench along Oak Street and would install a 1-inch-diameter water pipe and 2.5-inch-diameter conduit with electric service line. Excavated soils would be used for backfill, and the site would be returned to the original grade.

**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/ Walker Stinnette*

Walker Stinnette

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

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Katey C. Grange  
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:** Driveway and Utilities Installations on North Bonneville-Midway No. 1 Right-of-Way

## **Project Site Description**

The project site is located on BPA fee-owned ROW between structures 9/6 and 10/1 on the North Bonneville-Midway No. 1 transmission line in Carson, Skamania County, Washington (Township 3 North, Range 8 East, Section 29). The gravel driveway and underground water and electric service lines would be installed along Oak Street at the southern edge of the BPA property in an area that has been previously disturbed and currently consists of common grasses, weeds, and shrubs (primarily blackberry [*Rubus sp.*]). The underlying Washougal soil series is not hydric, and no wetlands are present within the project site. Carson Creek is located approximately 250 feet west of the project site and is separated from the site by a densely vegetated buffer. Approximately 700 feet downstream, Carson Creek is designated critical habitat and spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). Outside of the project site, the surrounding area is primarily residential with some isolated stands of trees and undeveloped grasslands. 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

**Explanation:** On January 13, 2022, BPA initiated National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 consultation with the following parties:

- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon
- Nez Perce Tribe
- Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP)

On June 16, 2022, BPA determined that the proposed undertaking would result in no historic properties affected (BPA CR Project No.: WA 2021 209; DAHP Log No.: 2022-01-00286-BPA). Concurrence was received from DAHP on June 16, 2022. The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation provided comment on June 28, 2022, requesting edits to BPA's determination report. In consultation with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the requested edits to the report were made, resubmitted, and accepted. No other comments were received.

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: The proposed action would result in soil disturbance from vegetation removal, grading and installation of the gravel driveway, excavation of the utilities trench, and minor soil compaction from vehicle and equipment use. All ground disturbance would occur within an area no greater than approximately 0.8 acres. Approximately 2,400 square feet of permanent soil impacts would occur where the gravel driveway is installed. Temporarily disturbed soils would eventually stabilize as vegetation becomes reestablished following completion of the proposed action. Implementation of the minimization measures noted below would minimize the potential for erosion and sedimentation. The proposed action would not impact geology.

Notes:

- Complete the proposed action during the dry season (approximately July to October).
- Stockpile excavated soils temporarily onsite in low-profile piles.
- Use excavated soils for backfill or dispose of off-site in accordance with all applicable Federal, state, and local regulations.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would temporarily remove, crush, or cover some common grasses, weeds, and shrubs (primarily blackberry) within an area no greater than approximately 0.8 acres. Approximately 2,400 square feet of permanent vegetation impacts would occur where the gravel driveway is installed. Temporarily disturbed areas would eventually revegetate following completion of the proposed action. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status plant species within or near the project site, and no suitable special-status species habitat is present.

### **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 this level of disturbance given surrounding land uses. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status wildlife species near the 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 with Conditions

Explanation: Carson Creek is located approximately 250 feet west of the project site. Approximately 700 feet downstream, Carson Creek is designated critical habitat and spawning and rearing habitat for steelhead trout, which is listed as "Threatened" under the Federal Endangered Species Act. A dense 250-foot vegetative buffer would be left undisturbed between Carson Creek and the project site, and implementation of the mitigation measures noted below would minimize the potential for erosion and sedimentation. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies and floodplains and would have no effect on fish species or habitats.

Notes:

- Complete the proposed action during the dry season (approximately June 1 through September 30).
- Stockpile excavated soils temporarily onsite in low-profile piles.

- Use excavated soils for backfill or dispose of off-site in accordance with all applicable Federal, state, and local regulations.

## 6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present within or near the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact wetlands.

## 7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Excavation is unlikely to reach depths that would intersect groundwater, and the proposed action would not generate or use hazardous materials that would contaminate groundwater or aquifers, if present. No new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers are proposed. 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 entirely within 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. No consistency review by the U.S. Forest Service would be required.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During implementation, the presence of equipment and general construction activities, including vegetation removal, grading, and trench excavation, would cause temporary visual impacts. The new gravel driveway would permanently change the appearance of the property. However, no above-ground structures are proposed, and temporarily disturbed areas would approximately return to original conditions. These changes would be temporary and/or consistent with the existing visual quality of the area.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would result in a minor and temporary increase in dust and emissions in the local area. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the proposed action.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action could temporarily and intermittently produce noise at levels greater than current ambient conditions. 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 project.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would not be expected to impact human health and safety.

### 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/ Walker Stinnette July 28, 2023  
Walker Stinnette, ECT-4 Date  
Environmental Protection Specialist