

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: FY24 Brasada-Harney Urgent Pole Replacement

PP&A No.: 4972

Project Manager: Meadow Nelson – TELP-TPP-1

Location: Harney County, Oregon

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

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to replace a wood pole structure and the associated structural/electrical components (e.g. cross arms, insulators, guy anchors, etc.) located at structure 109/7 on the Brasada-Harney No 1 transmission lines. BPA owns and operates the line that runs from Brasada substation to Harney substation in Harney County, Oregon.

BPA has identified a structure that poses substantial risk to the safety and reliability of the line that needs to be replaced as soon as possible. The structure in its current condition is both severely overstressed and could collapse in a strong wind. Brasada-Harney structure 109/7 would be rebuilt with class 1 poles and installed with a steel x-brace. There would be minimal ground disturbance at structure 109/7 as the structure can be worked on from the right-of-way. All wood pole replacements would be in-kind and would be placed approximately five feet from the old structure. Work would be conducted by crews of four to eight people, take approximately 3 to 6 days to complete, and include equipment operators and electrical linemen. Equipment could include an aerial lift crane, electrical line trucks, light duty trucks, and an auger attached to a backhoe or other method. The work would be completed during the outage window in December 2023.

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/ Zoe Wellschlager

Zoe Wellschlager

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer Date: December 15, 2023

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 is located in southeastern Oregon in the High Desert Wetlands ecoregion of the Northern Basin and Range. The structure is located in high desert country dominated by arid, sagebrush communities where soils are generally silty, sandy and rocky, with patchy vegetation cover. Structure 109/7 shares a corridor that is approximately 112 feet wide with the Redmond-Pilot Butte PACW No 1 transmission line and lies between residential developments.

Transmission Line/ROW	Structure	Township	Range	Section	Ownership
Brasada-Harney No 1	109/7	ORT15S	R13E	SEC19	private

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A cultural resources pedestrian survey was conducted for the Brasada-Harney 109/7 Urgent Pole and Crossarm Replacement Project. As a result of the pedestrian survey, a pre-contact lithic debitage and tool scatter (URBH-TC-02) was identified. The site is recommended as eligible for listing on to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criteria A and D. The Brasada-Harney No. 1 Transmission Line was also identified, and although it is a historic built resource, the replacement of one structure in kind does not affect the integrity of the transmission line.

Based on avoidance measures as outlined below under the 'Notes' field, BPA determined that the proposed project would result in no adverse effect to historic properties [§36 CFR 800.5(b)]. Concurrence was received verbally from the Bureau of Land Management on December 13th, 2023. Concurrence was received by both the Burns Paiute Tribe, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office on December 14th, 2023.

Notes:

- To insure that the site is not impacted during construction, a BPA archaeologist would flag off the boundary of the site within the APE so as to create an avoidance buffer. No construction activities would be allowed to occur within the flagged off area.
- A BPA archaeologist would be present to monitor construction activities to ensure that no individuals or equipment enter or damage the site.
- In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of the project, BPA would require that the work be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by the appropriate consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Localized soil disturbance would occur during wood pole replacements. Disturbance would take place in the already impacted right-of-way and would be minimal. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized as necessary.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities would be limited to the already impacted right-of-way and would not substantially alter existing plant communities. Any disturbed areas would be stabilized with weed free straw and seeded with a native seed mix. No concerns about sensitive plant species were expressed by public land managers.

In accordance with the Endangered Species Act, BPA obtained a species list for the project from the local U.S. Fish and Wildlife Office. No plant species protected under the ESA are listed in the project area. Therefore, the project would have "No Effect" on ESA-listed plants. According to state databases, no special-status plants or habitat are present in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction on the project would likely disturb wildlife in the area due to the presence of humans and additional noise. However, disturbance would be temporary and limited to the already impacted right-of-way and would not substantially alter the long-term footprint or operational noise of the line; therefore, wildlife and associated habitat would not be affected in the long term. No concerns about sensitive wildlife species were expressed by public land managers.

In accordance with the Endangered Species Act, BPA obtained a species list for the project from the local U.S. Fish and Wildlife Office. Gray wolf, northwestern pond turtle and the candidate species, monarch butterfly, are listed in the general project area. However, no documented sightings for these species in the project area are found in state wildlife databases, and suitable habitat for gray wolf and monarch butterfly is not present in the project area. Therefore, the project would have "No Effect" on gray wolf and monarch butterfly.

According to state databases, no special-status wildlife or wildlife habitat is present in the general project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No waterbodies, floodplain, or fish streams are present in the project area.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No waterbodies, floodplain, or fish streams are present in the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No project activities would intersect groundwater and/or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not alter existing land use and is not located in a specially designated area.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be performed within existing transmission line right-of-ways. Replacement of wood poles and associated components would be in-kind and within approximately five feet of the original location. The project would be consistent with the existing visual quality of the area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Exhaust and dust from utility and construction equipment may temporarily reduce air quality in the immediate project area. However impacts from increased vehicle use would be temporary and limited.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise of the transmission line would not change. The project area for structure 109/7 is located between residential communities where nearby human activity would be expected. Short term increases in ambient noise could occur due to construction activity. However, increased noise generation would be temporary limited to just a few days.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA personnel would develop a site-specific health and safety plan to address any hazards during the proposed work. The proposed work is necessary to ensure ongoing safe and reliable operation of the transmission line and to maintain power delivery in the region.

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 would notify and coordinate with the landowners/managers, including the BLM, in advance of the construction of the proposed project.

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

Signed: /s/ Zoe Wellschlager
Zoe Wellschlager
Scientist (Environmental)

Date: December 15, 2023