

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Hood River Electric Co-Op Interconnection (*Update to previous CX issued on January 23, 2024*)

**Project No.:** L0402

**Project Manager:** Lisa Casey, TEPL-TPP-1

**Location:** Hood River County, Oregon

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B1.3 Routine maintenance, B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities, B4.11 Electric power substations and interconnection facilities, B4.13 Upgrading and rebuilding existing powerlines

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to rebuild its Hood River Co-Op Service No. 1 transmission line from Hood River Substation to structure 1/12 to meet Hood River Co-Op's line and load request L0402. The line is currently a 12.5 kilovolt (kV) transmission line that would be upgraded to a 115 kV, double circuit transmission line. Pacific Corps would own one circuit and BPA would own the other. This is an update to the previous CX that was issued on January 23, 2024 to reflect additional access road improvements needed for project construction.

A new bay (bay 3) would be added at the existing Hood River Substation. The existing 12.5 kV bay (bay 2) would be retired, along with associated equipment and buswork (rigid conductor). The existing 115kV Bonneville Powerhouse-Hood River No. 1 line would be detached from bay 2 and re-connected to the new 115kV bay 3. The new 115kV bay 3 would be installed with various substation equipment three 115kV disconnect switches and a dead-end transmission structure. . Installation of the new 115kV bay 3 would impact an area of approximately 2,000 square feet (0.5 acre), where the existing ground mat would be extended with new ground mats, installed within the substation fence line, to protect the new 115kV equipment.

Within the existing substation control house, three existing equipment racks would be retired and four new racks would be installed.

BPA would remove 12 wood-pole structures and replace them with new structures. Structures 1/1 to 1/6 would be replaced with wood pole structures unless BPA can obtain light-duty steel poles prior to project implementation. Structures 1/7 to 1/12 would be replaced with light-duty steel poles. One existing wood structure would not be replaced after removal. All new structures would have single poles, except for three structures that would be 2-pole H-frame structures, and one structure would be a 3-pole H-frame structure. The new transmission structures would be located within the existing right-of-way, within 10 to 75 feet of the existing structure locations.

Structure Number	Existing Structure Height and Configuration	Proposed Structure Height and Configuration	Guy Wires Proposed
1/1	70-feet, wood H-frame	70-foot, wood or light-duty steel H-frame structure	Plate anchors
1/2	70-foot, single wood pole	70-foot, wood or light-duty steel H-frame structure	Plate anchors
1/3	60-foot, single wood pole	115-foot, wood or light-duty steel H-frame structure	Plate anchors
1/4	60-foot, single wood pole	100-foot, wood or light-duty steel single pole	Plate anchors
1/5	60-foot, single wood pole	95-foot, wood or light-duty steel single pole	NA
1/6	60-foot, single wood pole	100-foot, wood or light-duty steel single pole	NA
1/7	45-foot, single wood pole	100-foot, single light-duty steel pole	NA
1/8	50-foot, single wood pole	90-foot, single light-duty steel pole	NA
1/9	45-foot, single wood pole	95-foot, single light-duty steel pole	NA
1/10	45-foot, single wood pole	90-foot, single light-duty steel pole	Helical screw anchors
1/11	55-foot, single wood pole	NA	NA
1/12	45-foot, single wood pole	110-foot, 3-pole light-duty steel H-frame structure (new 1/11 structure)	Plate anchors

Staging of light-duty steel poles would occur on the western side of the Hood River Substation. Wood poles would be staged at the Celilo Maintenance Headquarters in The Dalles.

Approximately, 2,425 feet of existing access road would be improved and 975 feet of new access spur roads from the main access road would be installed. A 20-foot-long by 10-foot-wide vehicle pullout would also be installed along the main access road. A 125-foot-long temporary access road and a 40-foot-long temporary bridge would be installed to remove one existing structure. A new 30-foot-long by 24-inch-wide cross drain culvert would be installed. Six new 30-foot by 40-foot and one 50-foot by 50-foot landings would be constructed at the base of structures. A 700-foot-long stretch of direction of travel road would provide access to the project area from Experiment Station Drive to the south.

The northern boundary of the existing right-of-way would be extended about 36 feet. Approximately, 55 orchard and other non-native trees would be removed to install the new poles and associated guy wires. Per the landowner's request, the orchard tree stumps would be removed by BPA. Approximately, 13 native trees, consisting of big leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), white oak (*Quercus garryanna*) and cottonwood (*Populus balsamifera* ssp. *trichocarpa*) that pose a safety and reliability danger to the transmission line would also be removed for the project.

**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.

Beth Belanger  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange  
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.

**Proposed Action:** Hood River Electric Co-Op Interconnection (*Update to previous CX issued on January 23, 2024*)

## **Project Site Description**

The project is located in Hood River County, Oregon, approximately 1.8 miles south of the Columbia River. The project area is in Sections 1 and 2 of Township 2 North, Range 10 East. The access road and right-of-way (ROW) are surrounded by orchards. Two single-family residences are located adjacent to the project area.

Vegetation in the right-of-way consists of orchard trees around the western half of the project. The eastern half of the ROW is in a ravine area with native and non-native vegetation. The native vegetation consists of native roses (*Rosa* spp.), snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*), Oregon grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*), trailing blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*), goldenrod (*Solidago canadensis*), reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), cat tails (*Typha latifolia*), horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*) sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*), bracken fern (*Pteridium aquilinum*), stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and non-native species, including Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armenicus*), Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), and knapweeds (*Centaurea* spp.). To the north of this area is a native forest, with mature big leaf maples (*Acer macrophyllum*), vine maple (*Acer circinatum*), cottonwoods (*Populus balsamifera* ssp. *trichocarpa*), and Western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*).

There are no wetlands or waterways on the western half portion of the project. Clear Creek, a perennial stream crosses through the right-of-way on the eastern portion. Three palustrine emergent and scrub shrub wetlands were documented in this area during a 2023 wetland delineation.

## **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No

**Explanation:** On November 8, 2022, BPA initiated Section 106 consultation with the following entities: Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (CTWSRO), Nez Perce Tribe, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, and Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs responded on November 9, 2022, stating the importance of the Hood River area as a place within their ceded lands of the CTWSRO and requested continued communication on BPA's efforts to identify, evaluate and protect historic properties and cultural resources. BPA received a response from SHPO on November 22, 2022, acknowledging receipt of the submission and assigning the project a case number. BPA did not receive any other responses to the initiation letters within 30 days. A BPA archaeologist then proceeded with background research and an archaeological survey of the project area.

On November 2, 2023, BPA sent a cultural survey report and letters to the consulting parties with BPA's no adverse effect determination to cultural resources. None of the consulting parties responded within 30 days.

The BPA archaeologist surveyed the additional road improvement areas for cultural resources in April 2024 and concluded that the determination of no adverse effect for the project would remain. On April 25, 2024, a determination letter was sent to the consulting parties. None of the consulting parties responded to the letter within 30 days.

## **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: For the transmission structure replacement, most of the new poles would be installed near the same holes in which the previous poles were embedded. The maximum depth of disturbance would be 13 feet. Excavated soil would be used to backfill the new pole locations. To install the new spur roads to structures 1/9, 1/10, 1/11, about 485 cubic yards would be cut from the side slopes, of which 240 cubic yards would be used as road and/or landing fill. Remaining soil would be distributed in upland areas or at an approved off-site disposal location. Grading would occur to install new landings and to improve the existing access roads. Soil would also be disturbed when orchard tree stumps are removed.

Notes: Develop and implement an erosion control plan for construction to prevent soil erosion. Mulch and revegetate exposed soil.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Approximately 0.5 acres of permanent vegetation loss would occur where the new landings and access roads are installed. Temporary disturbance areas would be re-vegetated following construction. Approximately, a dozen native trees would also be removed. Tree removal along the edge of the right-of-way could increase the potential for non-native weed species to become established; however, the new tree canopy openings would be relatively small and trees would be allowed to regrow. Additionally, these areas already have a lot of native tree seedlings present, which would likely outcompete invading non-native species. 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 with Conditions

Explanation: Removal of native trees would occur between August 15 to March 1, to avoid impacts to nesting migratory birds. The project area is unlikely to have nesting migratory birds that would be impacted by construction activities. Construction activities may temporarily disturb and displace wildlife. There are no Federal or special-status species or habitats that would be impacted by the project.

Notes:

- Top and girdle large-diameter native trees to create habitat trees for wildlife.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project area has a perennial stream flowing through it, known as Cedar Creek. For removal of structure 1/11, a temporary bridge would be installed at the stream location but would not impact the stream because there would be no in-water work and bridge abutments would be installed above the stream's jurisdictional ordinary high-water mark. No migrant or residential fish populations are known to occur in Cedar Creek, and it is not listed as essential salmonid habitat. There are no floodplains in the project area.

Notes:

- Use helical guy wire anchors on structure 1/10 to minimize impacts to adjacent wetland.
- Place temporary bridge abutments above the delineated ordinary high-water mark.
- Install steel plates over existing culvert on the direction of travel road during construction.
- Use erosion control measures to protect water bodies.

## 6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project would result in about 3,000 square feet (0.07 acre) of permanent wetland loss and 400 square feet of temporary wetland impacts from the construction of an access road, tower landing and the installation of one structure. Temporary impacts would result from soil movement and crushing of wetland vegetation during road and landing construction. The temporary impact areas would be recontoured and revegetated when construction has been completed. BPA has obtained wetland permits from the Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL). The project qualifies for use of the US Army Corps of Engineers Nationwide Permit 57. BPA provided an in-lieu payment to DSL for mitigation of permanent impacts.

Notes:

- Wetland permits must be onsite during all construction activities.
- Use a native wetland seed mix to revegetate the temporary disturbance areas in the wetland.
- No spoils are allowed to be disposed of within the wetland.

## 7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is forty miles east of the Troutdale Aquifer System. The maximum depth of disturbance would be 13 feet deep for pole installation. There would not be impacts to groundwater or aquifers.

## 8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not result in minor land use changes. Orchard tree removal would not result in a large conversion of land use because orchard tree removal for the project would be a small percentage of the overall orchard trees on the parcel. The landowner would be compensated for orchard tree removal and would likely replant orchard trees in areas that could be replanted. The project is not within specially-designated areas.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The majority of the new structures would be 40 to 50 percent taller than the existing structures; however, due to the rolling topography and trees surrounding the area, the new towers would be largely obscured from view until in or near the project area. Furthermore, the rebuilt transmission line would be within the same utility right-of-way as the existing and would not create any new hard forest edges along the right-of-way.

## 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. Operation noise would not change.

## 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 strategic structure locations would improve the overall safety for transmission line workers rebuilding and 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 work with the underlying landowners to obtain the additional easement area needed for the right-of-way and to compensate the landowners for orchard tree removal. BPA Realty staff would also notify the underlying landowners and adjacent landowners 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:

Beth Belanger  
Environmental Protection Specialist