

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Dworshak-Taft Insulator Replacement, Mile 76 to Mile 89

Project No. (if applicable): 3355

Project Manager: Chad Hamel

Location: Shoshone County, Idaho and Mineral County, Montana

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

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA is proposing to replace insulators at 15 structure locations along the Dworshak-Taft No. 1, 500-kilovolt transmission line from mile 76 to mile 89. Refer to the table below for project location information.

Transmission Line	Structure Location	TRS	County, State
Dworshak-Taft No. 1	76/4	T47N R5E SEC35	Shoshone, ID
Dworshak-Taft No. 1	77/1, 77/2	T47N R5E SEC26	Shoshone, ID
Dworshak-Taft No. 1	77/3, 78/1	T47N R5E SEC25	Shoshone, ID
Dworshak-Taft No. 1	80/2	T47N R6E SEC29	Shoshone, ID
Dworshak-Taft No. 1	83/4	T19N R32W SEC15	Mineral, MT
Dworshak-Taft No. 1	84/4	T19N R32W SEC14	Mineral, MT
Dworshak-Taft No. 1	86/2, 86/3, 87/1, 88/1	T19N R31W SEC7	Mineral, MT
Dworshak-Taft No. 1	89/2, 89/5, 89/6	T19N R31W SEC5	Mineral, MT

Insulators located at the attachment points between the conductor and the transmission line structures listed above would be changed out by helicopter. Transmission line maintenance personnel would be positioned in the towers to assist with the removal and replacement of the insulators. Existing roads would be used as landing zones to transfer old and new insulators to and from the helicopter. A truck and dump trailer would provide daily storage of old and new insulators at the designated landing zones. All ground support vehicles would use existing roads to access structure locations and landing zones.

No ground disturbance or work in streams would be required for this project. All work would be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA standards.

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, July 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/ Michael A. Rosales

Michael A. Rosales

Physical Scientist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: July 13, 2016

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 the St. Joe National Forest (Shoshone County, Idaho) and in the Lolo National Forest (Mineral County, Montana). Work would occur within the Dworshak-Taft No 1 transmission line right-of-way which consists of low-growing grasses and shrubs. Structure locations are remote and topography varies from hilly to steep.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No ground disturbance is planned or would be performed. Existing roads would be used as helicopter landing zones and by ground support vehicles to access the towers.		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No ground-disturbing activities would be performed.		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> This project requires no tree or vegetation clearing. No suitable habitat is present within the project area for listed plant species.		
<u>Mitigation:</u>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Clean and inspect all construction vehicles and equipment prior to entering project site to prevent introduction of invasive weeds onsite. ✓ Clean and inspect all construction vehicles and equipment prior to exiting project site to prevent spread of invasive weeds offsite. 		
4. Wildlife (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No suitable habitat is present within the project area for listed wildlife species; however, the Canada lynx, a federally-listed threatened species, is known to occur in the broad vicinity. Because of the limited nature of the disturbance planned within transmission line right-of way, there is no potential to affect the Canada lynx.		
5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including federal/state special-status species and ESUs)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No instream work would be performed. No effect to aquatic species and/or habitat.		

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: No wetlands were identified in the work areas.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: No groundwater or aquifers would be affected by the proposed work.

8. **Land Use and Specially Designated Areas**

Explanation: No change in land use. However, Rainy Creek Road is a heavily used route that provides public access to the east portal entrance to the Route of the Hiawatha bike trail. Trail use is from late May thru late September. BPA's planned insulator replacement schedule is September 6 thru September 16, 2016. Impacts to public access would be minimal as TLM maintenance vehicles would only use this road as an access route to three of the fifteen tower locations.

Mitigation:

To prevent conflicts between the trail users and BPA TLM crews, BPA would implement the following measures:

- ✓ Provide traffic controls, as needed, to ensure the public has safe access to Rainy Creek Road and the east portal entrance to the Route of the Hiawatha at all times.
- ✓ Rainy Creek Road would not be used as a helicopter landing zone or an insulator staging area.
- ✓ Maintain a minimum 15-foot clearance on Rainy Creek Road at all times during project activities.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: The project involves in-kind replacement of insulators which would not alter or effect visual quality of the transmission line.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: Small amount of dust from driving vehicles to and from project locations would be temporary, existing air quality would not be affected.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: Helicopter noise would be temporary and localized.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: The proposed action would allow safe and timely access to the transmission line which would help reduce outage times and maintain reliable power 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, if necessary:

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: BPA Realty notified the USFS of the insulator replacement activities by email on April 20, 2016. USFS responded on April 21 indicating receipt of email notification and that it would be passed internally to respective Forest Service personnel for review/input. No further comments were received from the USFS as of June 30, 2016.

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

Signed: /s/ Michael A. Rosales
Michael A Rosales EPR-Bell-1

Date: July 13, 2016