

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: FY16 Wood Pole Replacements – Kalispell District

Project No. (if applicable): 3390

Project Manager: Gary Beck

Location: Flathead and Lincoln Counties, Montana

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

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to perform in-kind replacement of 40 wood pole structures and associated structural/electrical components (e.g., cross arms, insulators, guy anchors, etc.) along several transmission lines. Replacement poles would be placed in existing holes following removal of current pole structures, and may be re-augered to assure proper depth placement. Minor maintenance along existing access road prisms and landings is scheduled to be performed where necessary to facilitate safe access. No unauthorized construction activities would occur in any water body including streams, ponds, or wetlands. Access road maintenance may include blading, shaping, rocking, and construction of waterbars and drain dips. Refer to the table below for project locations.

Transmission Line	Structure	TRS	County, State
Columbia Falls-Kalispell No. 1	1/3, 1/4	T30N R20W SEC15	Flathead, MT
	1/6	T30N R20W SEC27	Flathead, MT
	2/6, 4/6	T29N R20W SEC4	Flathead, MT
	5/6	T29N R20W SEC9	Flathead, MT
	6/3	T29N R20W SEC20	Flathead, MT
	8/1, 9/2, 9/3	T29N R20W SEC29	Flathead, MT
	9/4, 10/2, 10/6	T29N R20W SEC31	Flathead, MT
	11/1, 11/5	T28N R21W SEC1	Flathead, MT
	11/7	T30N R20W SEC15	Flathead, MT
Columbia Falls-Trego No. 1	44/2	T34N R25W SEC27	Lincoln, MT
	44/3, 44/4	T34N R25W SEC22	Lincoln, MT
Libby-Bonnars Ferry No. 1	3/2	T31N R29W SEC32	Lincoln, MT
	3/5, 3/6, 3/8	T31N R29W SEC31	Lincoln, MT
	7/6	T31N R30W SEC22	Lincoln, MT
	9/1, 9/3	T31N R30W SEC29	Lincoln, MT
	9/4	T31N R30W SEC30	Lincoln, MT
	10/5, 10/7, 11/3	T31N R31W SEC25	Lincoln, MT
	11/6, 11/8	T31N R31W SEC26	Lincoln, MT
	12/1	T31N R31W SEC35	Lincoln, MT
	12/6, 13/4	T31N R31W SEC34	Lincoln, MT
	32/3	T31N R33W SEC18	Lincoln, MT
	34/7	T31N R33W SEC7	Lincoln, MT
	36/5	T32N R34W SEC36	Lincoln, MT
40/1, 40/4	T32N R34W SEC15	Lincoln, MT	

The proposed action would allow safe and timely access to the transmission lines which would help reduce outage times and maintain reliable power in the region. 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 - Environment

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel
Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: July 25, 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

Proposed routine maintenance activities would be conducted along the Columbia Falls-Kalispell No. 1, Columbia Falls-Trego No. 1, and Libby-Bonnars Ferry No. 1 transmission lines. All proposed activities would be performed in the existing transmission line right-of-ways and access road easements which are located in rural, non-developed areas and/or in rural, agricultural areas.

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"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A cultural survey was performed at all wood pole replacement locations, associated landings, and proposed road improvement locations. Report findings indicated that no historic properties would be affected by the undertaking. MT SHPO and the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes concurred with BPA's No Adverse Effect determination for all proposed transmission line maintenance activities. Crews and equipment are to use existing access roads to and from each work site. Any access road maintenance performed would be limited to the existing road prism. Landing construction, if needed, would be limited to an area not to exceed 100-feet wide by 200-feet long at each structure proposed for replacement. In the event that archaeological or historical materials are discovered during project activities, work in the immediate vicinity must stop, the area secured, and the WA DAHP, BPA archaeologist, and the environmental project lead would be notified. 		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Localized soil disturbance would occur during wood pole replacements, landing improvements, and access road maintenance activities. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized as necessary.</p>		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> No federal/state special-status plants present.</p>		
4. Wildlife (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Grizzly bears may be present in areas that are within ½-mile of the various transmission lines. Project activities are not expected to alter or affect habitat conditions for grizzly prey species or affect existing grizzly habitat and/or distribution. There are no known grizzly den sites in the project area. With respect to potential habitat conditions and possible future occupancy of these areas by grizzly bears, the proposed project is not expected to result in conditions that would preclude use by grizzly bears; therefore, this project would have a "No Effect" on grizzly bear and its habitat.</p>		

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



Explanation: Listed fish species may inhabit streams that are within ½-mile of the various transmission lines. Project activities are not planned near water resources containing listed fish species; therefore, there would be “No Effect” to listed fish species and to the associated aquatic habitat.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: At locations adjacent to wetlands, erosion control devices would be utilized to prevent sedimentation of wetlands during proposed project activities; therefore, there would be a “No Effect” on wetland habitat.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: No use of groundwater proposed. Maximum depth of disturbance would be about 10 feet below ground surface.

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



Explanation: No change in land use. No specially designated areas.

9. **Visual Quality**



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 replaced in the same location.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Small amount of dust and vehicle emission from construction activity.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Temporary construction noise during daylight hours. Operational noise of transmission line would not change.

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 personnel would perform landowner notifications within 30-days prior to project initiation and any concerns regarding proposed transmission line maintenance activities would be addressed.

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
Physical Scientist - Environment

Date: July 25, 2016