

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Big Eddy-Chenoweth No. 2 Impairment Remedies

PP&A No.: 3,319

Project Manager: Thomas Murphy, TELP-TPP-3

Location: Klickitat County, Washington

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

Description of the Proposed Action: The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to perform work at seven locations along approximately 3.3 miles of the Big Eddy-Chenoweth No. 2 230 kV transmission line. A recent LIDAR survey showed that clearance between the ground surface and transmission line conductor does not currently meet industry safety and performance standards. Work would include: replacing wood pole structures with taller poles, replacing or re-configuring hardware on existing wood pole structures, and ground excavation at three locations. All the work would be completed within the BPA transmission right-of-way using existing access roads and direction of travel routes. Equipment utilized may include a utility bucket truck, back hoe, dump trucks, and other heavy machinery. Total excavation volume is estimated at 101,000 cubic feet, with a footprint of approximately 1 acre of soil disturbance.

Erosion control measures for this project would include utilizing erosion control devices (e.g., water truck for dust control if necessary, silt fences, etc.) to minimize sedimentation loss during project activities and reseeding with an appropriate seed mix to stabilize any disturbed vegetative areas.

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/ Aaron C. Siemers

Aaron C. Siemers

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: August 15, 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 Big Eddy – Chenoweth No. 2 Impairment Remedies project is located in the Township, Range, Sections listed below within Klickitat County, Washington. The seven project areas that comprise the total project are located within an approximately 3.3-mile section of the transmission right-of-way. The project area is located on Klickitat County Port District land and private land in the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area. The land is designated as urban under the National Scenic Area Management plan. The land is mixed use, with The Dalles Municipal Airport, several office and warehouse buildings, and a mine located adjacent to the transmission right-of-way. Rural residential areas and grass pasture land are present as well. The project is located near the Columbia River in the Pleistocene Lake Basins ecoregion, which is the driest and warmest part of the Columbia River Plateau. Precipitation ranges approximately 14 to 16 inches annually. The local surface geology is comprised of Tertiary continental sedimentary rocks and Pleistocene flood deposits. Topsoil is thin and rocky and supports grasses and sagebrush. Elevations range from approximately 200 to 280 feet above ground surface. Surface topography is generally flat or with a mild slope toward the Columbia River to the south and west.

Township		Range		Sections
2	N	13	E	21,22,26

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"/>

Explanation: WA DAHP and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation were contacted regarding the proposed action. A cultural survey was conducted, and BPA determined that no historic properties would be affected by the proposed action. In a letter dated July 7, 2016, WA DAHP concurred with the determination. The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama did not respond to BPA’s Letter of Determination. According to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR Part 800, BPAs consultation requirements have been fulfilled. In accordance with a previous agreement with the Yakama Nation, BPA will provide archeological monitors during all impairment remedy construction activity.

2. Geology and Soils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Explanation: Soils in the project area are silty and sandy loam, and support grasses, sagebrush, and other native and non-native plants. Excavations and ground clearing would be limited to 3 feet maximum depth in three locations in the transmission right-of-way. The work sites would be restored following excavation and the local topography would be regraded. Erosion control measures would be utilized during soil removal and the area would be revegetated with an appropriate seed mix following project completion. The impacted areas would be fertilized if necessary to reestablish vegetation and minimize erosion.

3. **Plants** (including federal/state special-status species)

Explanation: No special-status species are present. Work is to be conducted in an existing transmission line right-of-way (ROW). Any disturbed areas would be seeded with a geographic and climate appropriate seed mix.

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

Explanation: No special-status species or designated habitat is present. All work would be performed in the transmission right-of-way. BPA crew would conduct nesting bird preconstruction surveys prior to ground disturbance or excavation and avoid removal of areas with active nests until fledging has been completed.

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

Explanation: Project would not be located in a floodplain. Typical erosion control BMPs would be implemented to limit erosion and sedimentation, and no riparian habitat would be affected.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: No wetlands are present in the project area.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: No new wells or use of ground water is proposed. The maximum depth of disturbance would be approximately 3 feet. Spill prevention measures would be present.

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

Explanation: The project area is located in the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area. However, the project area is designated as urban. No special restrictions apply and no additional land use evaluation has occurred.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: All work would be completed within the existing transmission ROW. At two locations, new, taller wood poles would be installed at existing structure locations. At one location, the structure would be raised 4.5 feet, and at another location the structure would be raised 13.5 feet. However, since the area is already the location of the existing Big Eddy – Chenoweth No. 2 transmission line, installing new taller poles would have no significance on the visual quality of the area. At three locations, ground clearing and excavation would be conducted. The locations would be re-graded and restored as much as possible to pre-excavation conditions. The excavation locations would be seeded with an appropriate seed mix.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: The project would create temporary dust and vehicle emissions due to construction, but no significant impacts. A water truck would be employed if necessary to mitigate dust during construction.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: The project would create temporary noise due to construction activities, but no significant impacts are anticipated.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: The project would increase the safety and reliability of the transmission line by increasing clearance

between the line and the ground surface.

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: Not applicable

- 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: Not applicable

- 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: Not applicable

- 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: Not applicable

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: The proposed project is located on private land and Klickitat County Port District land. BPA would continue ongoing coordination with the landowners.

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

Signed: /s/ Aaron C. Siemers
Aaron C. Siemers
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: August 12, 2016