

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Shelton-Fairmount No. 1 Transmission Line Clearance Impairment Correction Project

**Project Manager:** Natasha Gentry – TEZM-MANGAN

**Location:** Mason County, Washington

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

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to fund Tacoma Power to replace two of their wood pole transmission line structures. The distance between Tacoma Power's Pearl Cushman transmission line and BPA's Shelton-Fairmount transmission line is insufficient with current electrical safety standards, referred to as impairments, and needs to be corrected.

The impairment correction would be made by replacing two of Tacoma Power's wood pole structures (28/1 and 28/2) with similar wood poles, that would be about 10 feet shorter. The new poles would be installed within five feet of the existing poles, and would be inserted into holes excavated by an auger attached to a boom truck. Once the poles are installed, framed, and conductor transferred to the new poles, the old poles would be cut with a chainsaw at ground level, and the remainder of the pole underground would be removed with a backhoe. The augered spoils would be used to backfill the old holes and excess spread around the localized area. No new access roads, landings, or staging area improvements are expected.

**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/ Becky Hill

Becky Hill  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Flux Resources, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Carol Leiter

Carol Leiter  
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel \_\_\_\_\_ August 17, 2020

Sarah T. Biegel  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date

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.

**Proposed Action:** Shelton-Fairmount No. 1 Transmission Line Clearance Impairment Correction Project

## **Project Site Description**

The project area is located within the intersection of BPA's Shelton-Fairmount No. 1 and Tacoma Power's Pearl-Cushman rights-of-way transmission line corridors (T22N R4W Section 21, Willamette Meridian). The intersection is located on Tacoma Power's fee-owned property, about 700 feet north of BPA's Potlatch Substation, and about 2.5 miles southwest of Hoodport, Washington in Mason County. Several unpaved access roads weave in and out of the transmission line corridors and through the forested habitat that lines each corridor. This portion of the Olympic Peninsula is primarily privately-owned forest property in various stages of timber harvest, with occasional rural residences scattered throughout the local area. The southern edge of a large residential community is about 1,300 feet north of the project area, between the BPA rights-of-way corridor and Lake Kakanee.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA initiated Section 106 consultation on January 2, 2020, with the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), the Skokomish Tribal Nation, and the Squaxin Island Tribe. Representatives of the Skokomish Tribal Nation and DAHP concurred with the Area of Potential Effect on January 6, 2020. On April 28, 2020, the BPA archaeologist determined that implementation of the proposed undertaking would result in no historic properties affected and sent a report supporting that determination to the previously mentioned consulting parties, as well as the Cultural Resources Coordinator at Tacoma Power. On April 29, 2020, DAHP concurred with the archaeologist's determination of No Adverse Effect with the stipulation for an unanticipated discovery plan. No other responses were received.

Notes:

- Should cultural materials be encountered during the implementation of the project, work shall halt, and the stipulations of the Inadvertent Discovery Plan should be implemented. The BPA archaeologist should be notified immediately.

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented to avoid or minimize erosion or sedimentation impacts to surrounding areas.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: There are no documented occurrences of any plants listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in the project area; therefore, the proposed project would have No Effect on ESA-listed plant species. The following plant species, all of which do not have any special listing status, could be permanently impacted by the project: native and non-native grasses; various herbaceous and non-vascular plants; salal; bracken and sword ferns; immature scotch broom, and a few sapling conifer trees. Permanent impacts to these non-special-status, native and non-native plant species are acceptable, because they are common and prolific species within the rights-of-way, and the disturbed construction areas would be revegetated with native species appropriate to the area, and thereby, increasing habitat quality.

Notes:

- The project area is located in the intersection of Tacoma Power's rights-of-way and BPA's rights-of-way corridors. Both corridors are regularly maintained for low-growing vegetation. No mature trees or tall-statured vegetation would be impacted by project actions.
- To prevent the potential introduction or spread of noxious weeds, the construction vehicles and equipment would be cleaned before entering the project area.
- A regionally appropriate weed-free certified, native grass seed mix or pollinator seed mix would be used to revegetate disturbed areas upon project completion.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no documented occurrences of wildlife species listed under the ESA in the project area, nor is there any designated critical habitat in the project area. Therefore, the proposed project would have No Effect on ESA-listed wildlife species or designated critical habitat. Generalist wildlife species with no special-status using the project area would not be permanently impacted by the project, as the construction activities would be temporary, and limited to a relatively small construction area, which is low-quality habitat.

Notes:

- Wildlife in the area would be accustomed to the operational noise and presence of the transmission lines. The local area is subject to frequent human presence due to routine vegetation management and line maintenance; therefore, wildlife would likely be habituated to frequent human activity and temporarily disperse from the area. The proposed project would not affect wildlife to a level of disturbance or disruption.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would not have an effect on waterbodies, floodplains, or fish because the closest of these resources is located about 3,000 feet away from the project area.

Notes

- Hill Creek is the nearest stream and is located about 3,000 feet east of the project area.
- The nearest floodplain is located about one mile west of the project area, and is associated with the North Fork Skokomish River.

- Coastal cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, and bull trout (an ESA federally-listed species) use the North Fork Skokomish River for migration purposes. This river is designated critical habitat for bull trout.

## 6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation:

The proposed project would not have an effect on wetlands when wetland-specific BMPs are implemented.

Notes:

- The southern edge of a 7 acre freshwater forested/shrub wetland is located about 30 feet beyond the reach of this project's construction area. No direct impacts to the wetland would occur as a result of the project, and implementing BMPs would avoid indirect impacts.

## 7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or use of groundwater is proposed.

## 8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No specially-designated land uses are present in the project area. The project activities would be consistent and compatible with land uses within and adjacent to the project area.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be completed within the existing rights-of-way corridors. The replacement wood pole structures would be similar to the existing wood pole structures. Therefore, the project would not impact the existing visual quality conditions of the rights-of-way.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary dust and vehicle emissions would increase in the local area during construction activities.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary increase in noise would occur during construction activities.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no impact to human health or safety as a result of this project.

### **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 has been coordinating with Tacoma Power as the project area is located on Tacoma Power fee-owned property. Tacoma Power would notify the residents and landowners near the project area, as needed.

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

Signed: /s/ Becky Hill  
Becky Hill, ECT-4  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Flux Resources, LLC

August 17, 2020  
date