

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Puget Sound Energy Impairment Removal Project

PP&A No.: 4191

Project Manager: Cynthia Rounds - TEPL-TPP-1

Location: Skagit County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities, B4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to partially compensate Puget Sound Energy (PSE) to bury approximately 230 feet of overhead electrical lines. A survey of the 500-kilovolt Monroe-Custer No. 1 transmission line, between structures 57/1 and 57/2, resulted in the identification of a PSE distribution line that is an unsafe distance away from the BPA transmission line above. In certain weather conditions, there is a risk of electrical arcing due to the reduced clearance. A trench would be excavated parallel to a county road between an existing PSE wood pole on the east side of the BPA right-of-way, and another PSE wood pole on the west side of the right-of-way. Conduit and electrical conductor would be installed in the trench, and the trench then backfilled and restored to match previously existing conditions. A new underground vault would also be installed at the west end of the new buried conductor run. The work would be done using conventional utility equipment and techniques, and is anticipated to take less than three days in fall 2020.

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/ Oden Jahn

Oden W. Jahn

Natural Resource Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange

Katey C. Grange

Date: September 3, 2020

NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s):

Environmental Checklist

BPA Inadvertent Discovery of Cultural Resources Procedure

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 site is in rural Skagit County. The trench would be excavated parallel and adjacent to a county road serving rural residences. The trench site is a grass-covered road shoulder that traverses a small area of undeveloped property, a residential driveway, a residence, a parallel row of arbor vitae, and an adjacent utility pole along its path.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: A BPA Historian and Archaeologist reviewed proposed activities and conducted a cultural survey of the area. BPA's Monroe-Custer No.1 transmission line is located within the APE, however it was energized in 1975 and does not meet the minimum criteria per BPA's Multiple Property Documentation. No cultural resources were identified as a result of the cultural survey. BPA determined that these activities would result in no historic properties affected.

On August 24, 2020, the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historical Preservation (DAHP) concurred with the finding. No other comments were received from BPA's consultation efforts.

In the event any archaeological material is encountered during project activities, PSE would be instructed to follow BPA's Inadvertent Discovery of Cultural Resources Procedure by stopping work in the vicinity and immediately notify the BPA archaeologist listed in the Inadvertent Discovery Procedure, who would coordinate notifications to interested tribes, DAHP, and the appropriate local, state and Federal agencies. PSE would be instructed to implement reasonable measures to protect the discovery site, including any appropriate stabilization or covering, and take reasonable steps to ensure the confidentiality of the discovery site, including restricting access.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would take place on the shoulder of an existing county road and the surface of a residential driveway. Geology and soils would be temporarily disturbed by excavation and trenching. Disturbed soils would be seeded with an appropriate seed mix/mulch, and/or covered with crushed rock.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Federal/state special-status species and habitats known to occur in the project area. Therefore, the proposed action would not affect special-status plant species. Grass on the road shoulder would be temporarily disturbed, but would be restored after construction.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Federal/state special-status species and habitats known to occur in the project area; therefore, the proposed action would not affect Federal/state special-status wildlife. Non-sensitive wildlife that may utilize the project area could be affected by construction noise, use of equipment, and human activity; however, these impacts would be temporary, would only occur during daylight hours, and habitat would not be modified in a way that would preclude the future use of the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities are located in upland areas away from waterbodies, floodplains, or listed fish species; therefore, the project would have no impacts to these resources.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is in an upland area and would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities are not expected to impact groundwater or aquifers. Excavation would not occur below approximately six feet and is not anticipated to intersect ground water.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is on county property adjacent to a private rural residential property. There would be no change to land use at the project location.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not substantially alter visual quality. Views would have a small, minor improvement with the undergrounding of a portion of an overhead distribution line.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Exhaust and dust from utility equipment may temporarily reduce air quality by a small amount in the immediate project area.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to human health or safety are expected as a result of project activities. The proposed project would correct a potentially unsafe situation on the Monroe-Custer No. 1 transmission line.

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: The proposed project is within BPA's and PSE's ROW easements and consistent with activities typically permitted by easement agreements. PSE would coordinate landowner notification according to their normal procedures.

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

Signed: /s/ Oden Jahn, Date: September 3, 2020
Natural Resource Specialist - EPI-4