

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Grizzly – Captain Jack No. 1 and Grizzly – Summer Lake No. 1 Structures
17/4 Urgent Insulator Replacement Project

PP&A No.: 4,846

Project Manager: Ryan Martin, TPOW-TPP-4

Location: Crook County, Oregon

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

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to replace insulators on two structures located at 17/4 of the 500 kV Grizzly – Captain Jack No. 1 and Grizzly – Summer Lake No. 1 high-voltage transmission lines in central Oregon. BPA owns and operates the lines that run south from Grizzly Substation in Jefferson County, Oregon, to Captain Jack Substation in Klamath County, OR, and Summer Lake Substation in Lake County, OR. The transmission lines are a key component of the Northwest's high voltage transmission system.

In line mile 17 of the lines as they trend south from Grizzly Substation, BPA has identified insulators that pose substantial risk to the safety and reliability of the lines and need to be replaced as soon as possible. Specifically, BPA is proposing to replace insulators on structures 17/4 on both transmission lines. In order to perform the work safely, access road improvements would also be needed, including the installation of a new approach from the nearby highway, installing gravel within approximately 700 feet of road footprint, and installing landings at the structures. In order to minimize ground disturbance, rubber tired heavy equipment would be mobilized, cribbing would be utilized, and geotextile fabric would be placed down on the ground prior to the installation of rock. Work would be conducted by crews of four to eight people, take approximately 3 to 6 days to complete, and include equipment operators and electrical linemen. Equipment would include an aerial lift crane, electrical line trucks, light duty trucks, dump truck, and grader.

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/ Aaron Siemers

Aaron Siemers, EPR-4

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange

Katey C. Grange

Date: August 5, 2022

NEPA Compliance Officer

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: Grizzly – Captain Jack No. 1 and Grizzly – Summer Lake No. 1, Structures 17/4 Urgent Insulator Replacement Project

Project Site Description

The project is located in Central Oregon, on the eastern slopes of the Cascades, in the Deschutes River Valley Ecoregion of the Blue Mountains. The ecoregion is nestled between the John Day/Clarno Highlands of the Blue Mountains to the east, and the Cascade Mountain Range to the west, in the Deschutes River watershed. It is characterized by grasslands and sagebrush, and is less arid than some of the other ecoregions east of the Cascades. With more water availability, canals provide irrigation water to agricultural lands, and human population density is relatively high.

At the proposed work location, the transmission line corridor right-of-way (ROW) crosses State Highway 126. Structures 17/4 are located approximately 300 ft. south of the highway. The corridor is approximately 400 ft. wide in this location, and contains three high voltage lines, all supported by steel lattice structures. Soils are generally silty, sandy and rocky, with patchy vegetation cover. Adjacent to the ROW to the east, pines, juniper and other tree species are present, with native shrubs and grasses. Agricultural lands are present to the south and west. Vegetation within the ROW is periodically managed to remove tall growing vegetation and promote low-growing species. Vegetation in the ROW includes sage brush, rabbit brush, and grasses. No waterways or wetlands are present near the proposed work site.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA Archaeologists have reviewed the proposed project. With the proposed work plan utilizing rubber tired heavy equipment, cribbing for outriggers, and geotextile fabric, ground disturbance would be minimal, and less than the level of disturbance associated with constructing the original infrastructure in the project area.

According to the State Historic Preservation Office database no previously identified cultural resources are present within the work area. Because only very minimal ground disturbance would be necessary, BPA has determined, per 36 CFR 800.3(a)(1), that this undertaking is a type of activity that does not have the potential to cause effects on historic properties, assuming such historic properties were present.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work includes several elements to avoid substantial ground disturbance, including mobilizing rubber-tired equipment, restricting blading, and placing

geotextile fabric down prior to rock placement. No excavation is proposed. Therefore, impacts to geology and soils would be minimal.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some plants such as sage brush in the vicinity of the work site would be disturbed by project activities, such as developing landings at the steel lattice structure sites. However, ground disturbance would be minimized as much as possible. Any disturbed areas would be stabilized with weed free straw and seeded with a native seed mix.

In accordance with the Endangered Species Act, BPA obtained a species list for the project from the local U.S. Fish and Wildlife Office. No plant species protected under the ESA are listed in the project area. Therefore, the project would have "No Effect" on ESA-listed plants.

According to state databases, no special-status plants or habitat are present in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Wildlife that could be present in the project area, such as small mammals and birds, could be temporarily disturbed or displaced by project activities. However, disturbance would be temporary, and the surrounding lands provide ample cover.

In accordance with the Endangered Species Act, BPA obtained a species list for the project from the local U.S. Fish and Wildlife Office. Gray wolf and the candidate species monarch butterfly are listed in the general project area. However, no documented sightings for these species in the project area are found in state wildlife databases, and suitable habitat for gray wolf and monarch butterfly is not present in the project area. Therefore, the project would have "No Effect" on gray wolf and monarch butterfly.

According to state databases, no special-status wildlife or wildlife habitat is present in the general project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No waterbodies, floodplain, or fish streams are present in the project area.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present in the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No project activities would intersect groundwater and/or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not alter existing land use, and is not located in a specially designated area.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The road improvement proposed for the project would alter the visual character to a certain extent by placing geotextile and rock within the existing road footprint and building landings, however, the overall existing visual profile of a high-voltage transmission corridor would not be impacted, and vegetation disturbance would be minimized to the extent possible.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Short term impacts to air quality could occur from dust generated by construction activities and vehicle emissions. However, road contractors would be required to manage dust generation, and impacts from increased vehicle use would be temporary and limited.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Short term increase in ambient noise could occur due to construction activity. However, increased noise generation would be temporary. The project area is in a rural, agricultural area, and the likely number of human or animal noise receptors is low.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is designed to lower risks to human health and safety by removing unsafe components of the transmission line hardware that could lead to line failure and potentially wild fire. All construction activity would follow established industry standard safety protocols, including a Safety Plan, job hazard briefings, and employing flaggers as necessary at the nearby state highway.

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 reached out to all stakeholder in the project area, including underling land-owners and the State of Oregon Dept. of Transportation. BPA would continue to coordinate construction activity as necessary during project implementation and finalization.

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

Signed: /s/ Aaron Siemers
Aaron Siemers, EPR
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: August 5, 2022