

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Umatilla Electric Cooperative Temporary Interconnection Project at Tower Road

Project No.: L0579

Project Manager: Jared Lacambra, TPCF-MEAD-GOB

Location: Morrow County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.11 Electric power substations and interconnection facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to install connectors between structures 8/2 and 8/3 of the Boardman-Alkali No. 1 transmission line to allow Umatilla Electric Cooperative (UEC) to temporarily interconnect to BPA's Boardman-Alkali No. 1 transmission line. UEC would connect a flying tap between the BPA connectors and a UEC structure located outside of the BPA rights-of-way. The temporary flying tap interconnection would provide UEC continuous power service while UEC constructs a new 230/115 kV tap transmission line and substation nearby to support new load growth. When service is no longer needed by UEC, the temporary flying tap would be disconnected from the BPA connectors. No ground disturbing activities are proposed.

Findings: In accordance with Section 1021.102 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; 89 FR 34074, April 30, 2024; 90 FR 29676, July 3, 2025 [Interim Final Rule]) and *DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Implementing Procedures* (dated June 30, 2025), BPA has determined the following:

- 1) The proposed action fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021;
- 2) The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion; and
- 3) There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal (see attached Environmental Evaluation).

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review. ¹

¹ BPA is aware that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), on February 25, 2025, issued an interim final rule to remove its NEPA implementing regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500–1508. Based on CEQ guidance, and to promote completion of its NEPA review in a timely manner and without delay, in this CX BPA is voluntarily relying on the CEQ regulations, in addition to the interim final rule to revise DOE NEPA regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021 and NEPA Implementing Procedures (dated June 30, 2025), to meet its obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.

Becky Hill
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Evaluation

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 located about 5 miles west of Boardman, Oregon. Tower Road and a truck stop are located about 1,500 feet west of the site, and Interstate 84 is located about 200 feet to the north of the site. The surrounding area contains large warehouses, an airport, irrigated circle crops and an irrigation canal, degraded rangeland with sparse vegetation cover due to grazing, and transmission line rights-of-way corridors. The Columbia River is about 3,000 feet north of the project site. No wetlands or waters are located within 500 feet of the project site.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On September 10, 2025, BPA's historian and archaeologist reviewed the proposed activities and determined that these types of activities meet the requirements for the *Programmatic Agreement Among the Bonneville Power Administration, the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, the Washington State Historic Preservation Office, the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to Address Effects to BPA Transmission Lines* (December 19, 2024). Pursuant to Stipulation I.A.1 no further Section 106 review or consultation is required.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing work is proposed; therefore, there would be no impacts to geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing work is proposed. The bucket truck traveling to and from the point of interconnection would travel along a two-track dirt access road within an active grazing pasture. Therefore, there would be no impacts to plants.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing work is proposed. Noise generated from a bucket truck traveling to and from the point of interconnection would be temporary and would be consistent with existing noises generated from Interstate 84 traffic that wildlife would already be acclimated to. Therefore, there would be no impacts to wildlife habitat or species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing work is proposed; therefore, there would be no impacts to water bodies, floodplains, fish, or fish habitat.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing work is proposed; therefore, there would be no impacts to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing work is proposed; therefore, there would be no impacts to groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The point of interconnection is within the BPA rights-of-way on the Boardman-Alkali No. 1 transmission line. No change in land use would occur.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in the visual character of right-of-way would occur and no new facilities would be constructed.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary generation of emissions associated with bucket truck use may be produced.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Noise associated with the bucket truck traveling to and from the point of interconnection would be consistent with existing vehicle noise generated from Interstate 84, located about 200 feet to the north of the site. No new operational noise would be created as a result of the project. Therefore, there would be no impacts to noise quality.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No hazardous materials would be generated or used for this project. The project would not create any new safety hazards or use materials that could threaten human health and safety. No new impacts to human health and safety are anticipated.

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's Realty Specialist has coordinated with, and will continue to coordinate with UEC, the City of Boardman, and other adjacent landowners near the point of interconnection.

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

Signed:

Becky Hill
Environmental Protection Specialist