Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: Marion-Alvey No. 1, Santiam-Alvey No. 2, and Lookout Point-Alvey No. 1&2 Access Road Rehabilitation Project

PP&A No.: 4984

Project Manager: James Barnhart – TELD-TPP-3

Location: Lane 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 conduct improvement/reconstruction of access roads and landings along the Marion-Alvey No. 1 Lookout Point- Alvey No. 1&2, and Santiam-Alvey No. 2 transmission lines. To repair the access road leading to the 60/1 tower of the Santiam-Alvey No. 2 line, the project would begin at Buford Park Road and extend to the 60/1 tower which is approximately 1.4 miles of access road. BPA also proposes to conduct maintenance on an access road along the Marion-Alvey No. 1 and the Lookout Point- Alvey No. 1&2 lines. Specifically, the road maintenance would extend from Ridgeway Road to structures 12/8 on the Lookout Point-Alvey No. 1&2 lines. Access road maintenance would then turn north and continue to the Marion-Alvey No. 1 line at structure 62/4 to structure 61/3, encompassing approximately 1.6 miles. BPA proposes to improve/reconstruct these access roads and landings due to damage, such as rutting, that occurred during emergency repair activities of the Marion-Alvey No. 1 and Santiam-Alvey No. 2 transmission lines in January of 2024. BPA also proposes to replace the vehicle access gate at Buford Park Road.

BPA proposes to conduct light road grading, to include smoothing, reshaping, and filling irregularities that would not impact any native soil beneath imported fill. Damaged or destroyed drain dips and waterbars would be replaced. Landings would be bladed and shaped, and crushed rock installed for surfacing. Rock no greater than 45 tons per 100 feet of road surface (approximately 8-10 inches deep) would be added to existing road surfaces and approaches and potholes would be filled. Adjacent to Buford Park Road erosion and sediment control best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented, such as straw mulch and wattles. BPA would also reconstruct the ditches immediately adjacent to access roads to restore the prior width-to-depth ratio and install geotextile fabric within the established road prism. When working on land not owned or managed by BPA, material and design guidelines set forth by land managers would be followed.

These actions would occur on existing access roads and landings on private property for which BPA has an easement. Access roads would possess a well-defined and established prism and travel surface that includes a rock base and surface. Equipment would include an excavator, roller, and dump trucks, as well as electrical bucket truck and light duty trucks. The work would occur in spring of 2024.

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.

Steven Selser
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer Date: October 31, 2024

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: Marion-Alvey No. 1, Santiam-Alvey No. 2, and Lookout Point-Alvey No. 1&2 Access Road Rehabilitation Project

Project Site Description

The project is located in the Willamette Valley, east of Eugene Oregon. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has designated the Willamette Valley ecoregion as a Level III ecoregion. It is slightly larger than the Willamette Valley for which it is named. The Willamette Valley ecoregion has less precipitation and lower elevations than neighboring mountainous ecoregions. Historically, the region contained rolling prairies, oak savanna, coniferous forests, extensive wetlands, and deciduous riparian forests. Today, it contains the bulk of Oregon's population, industry, commerce, and agriculture. Productive soils and a temperate climate make it one of the most important agricultural areas in Oregon. Willamette Valley is a rolling, broad, lowland valley. Elevations are low, as is topographic relief in the valley. Landforms are old terraces and floodplains. Deep soils and gravels cap volcanic basalts and old ocean sediments. Soils are productive.

The access roads are mainly within BPA's transmission line right of way (ROW) on Mt. Pisgah with elevations from about 600ft to about 1200ft above sea level. They are in open areas, and adjacent to occasional oak woodlands, the ROW also bisects evergreen tree stands in some areas. The project area is located in upland areas without wetlands or waterbodies. The access road work would be performed on existing access roads and landings on private property for which BPA has an easement. Access roads would possess a well-defined and established prism and travel surface that includes a rock base and surface.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: An Area of Potential Effects (APE) was developed for the project. The project APE was surveyed in February 2024 prior to the roadwork. No cultural resources were identified at that time. On February 16, 2024, BPA initiated consultation with the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians, Lane County, Lane County Parks, Mount Pisgah Arboretum, Friends of Buford Park and Mt. Pisgah Arboretum, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

The Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde requested a sub-surface survey of the APE, and a research design was developed to test specific areas consistent with a Willamette Valley pre-contact settlement pattern model. The survey did identify a pre-contact archaeological site within the APE; however, it was determined that the project would have no adverse effect on this or any other cultural resource. On September 25, 2024, a determination of effect memo was sent to the consulting parties with a determination of No Adverse Effect. On October 25, 2024, the 30-day response period expired. No comments were received from consulting parties.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA will require that work be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA and in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties. Please provide the project sponsor with a copy of BPA's Post Review Discovery Protocol.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: Access road and landing improvements would involve blading and shaping, followed by placement of rock and compaction of the footprint. Disturbed, un-rocked soils would be stabilized with hydromulch, native seed, and erosion control blankets. As necessary, erosion and sediment control best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented, such as straw mulch and wattles. Restoration efforts would be inspected prior to de-mobilization, and monitored to ensure final stabilization goals are met.

Notes:

- Use erosion control best management practices.
- Revegetate disturbed soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: Impacts to vegetation would be limited to the immediate work area near the access road and landings. No documented Endangered Species Act (ESA) or State of Oregon special-status species or habitats are present in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground disturbance would be limited to within the existing landings, road surface and immediately adjacent drainage ditches. A species list for the project location was acquired from USFWS on 15 February 2024 and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife's sensitive species list was reviewed. No Threatened or Endangered, or special status wildlife species or habitat would be affected by the actions. Temporary wildlife disturbance from noise would occur during maintenance activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: No in-water work would occur. The purpose of the work would be to conduct road and landing maintenance that would prevent erosion and soil loss into waterways. All drainage maintenance would be conducted to restore the flow of water to the original engineered design. Erosion control BMPs would be implemented to prevent sedimentation.

Notes:

- Erosion and sediment control best management practices would be utilized during construction. All disturbed soils would be stabilized and reseeded upon project completion.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: No work would occur within wetlands. The purpose of the work would be to conduct road and landing maintenance that would prevent erosion and soil loss into wetlands. All drainage maintenance would be conducted to restore the flow of water to the original engineered design. Erosion control BMPs would be implemented to prevent sedimentation impacts to nearby wetlands.

Notes:

- Erosion and sediment control best management practices would be utilized during construction. All disturbed soils would be stabilized and reseeded upon project completion.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No excavation would occur at depths that would intersect groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use would occur.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in the visual character of the access roads and landings would occur.

Notes:

- Upon project completion, disturbed soils would be reseeded with a native erosion control seed mix and monitored for revegetation.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor, temporary generation of emissions associated with increased vehicle traffic would occur during road work activity.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would have limited, temporary impacts to noise related to heavy equipment operations. However, construction activity would occur during daylight hours, when potential impacts to people and wildlife would be minimized, and the project is located in a fairly remote area.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Maintenance activity would improve safety of access roads.

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 transmission line maintenance foreman, access road engineers, environmental representatives, and realty representatives have discussed proposed project activities with the landowner, and would continue to coordinate activities with the landowner through construction and into post-construction revegetation monitoring.

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

Signed: Date: October 31, 2024

Steven Steve Selser
Physical Scientist (Environmental)