

United States Government

Department of Energy  
Bonneville Power Administration

# memorandum

DATE: May 23, 2005

REPLY TO  
ATTN OF: KEC-4

SUBJECT: Environmental Clearance Memorandum

TO: Kirk Robinson  
Project Manager - TNP-TPP-3

**Proposed Action: Combine Hills Wind Project Interconnection, including Walla Walla-Pendleton Transmission Line Upgrade and PacifiCorp Tie Line Upgrade Projects**

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Appendix B, Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B4.6 Additions/Modifications to electric power transmission facilities within previously develop area; and B4.8 New electricity transmission agreements for transfer of power.

**Location:** State of Oregon, Umatilla County; and State of Washington, Walla Walla County.

**Proposed by:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)

**Description of the Proposed Action:** The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to interconnect 63 megawatts of wind generation from an expansion of the existing Combine Hills Wind Project and upgrade transmission lines in Umatilla County, Oregon and Walla Walla County, Washington to accommodate the interconnection. Eurus Energy America Corporation (Eurus), the wind project proponent, is requesting services for interconnection of 63 megawatts to a tap on the 69-kilovolt (kV) Walla Walla-Pendleton line. Their existing Combine Hills Turbine Ranch would be expanded on the plateau west of the town of Milton-Freewater, Umatilla County, Oregon. Their proposal is to install 41 new 1.5-MW turbines. The wind project has an approved Conditional Use Permit #C-1022-02B from Umatilla County. The developer is seeking an amendment to their existing permit for site-specific updates.

The proposed project (action) of BPA is to upgrade approximately 5.8 miles of the 69-kV Walla Walla to Pendleton transmission line to 115 kV and construct a "tap" or interconnection from the transmission line to the Combine Hills Turbine Ranch Phase 2 substation. The Walla Walla-Pendleton transmission line upgrade occurs between the Stateline tap and structure 9/7 in an area of dryland farming and shrub-steppe grazing. The upgrade of the 69kV line requires removal of old poles, insulators, and conductors and installation of new poles within the same right-of-way, and new conductor and insulators to handle the increased electricity load. This line will continue to be operated at 69-kV at this time. The interconnection with the wind project substation will be a short transmission line approximately 50 feet in length connecting the substation to the transmission line.

BPA will also provide funding or conduct the work to upgrade 1.4 miles of PacifiCorp's transmission line directly adjacent to Highway 12 one mile west of Walla Walla, Washington. This transmission line connects BPA's Walla Walla Substation and PacifiCorp's substation in Walla Walla and is in an area of rural residential homes and streets. The upgrade of the PacifiCorp line requires installation of a new larger conductor on the line between the PacifiCorp and BPA Walla Walla substations and corresponding equipment upgrades in the PacifiCorp Walla Walla Substation. The new transmission line will remain at 69-kV but be larger in size. The existing power line poles will be fitted with new insulators and new conductors will be strung between the poles to complete the transmission line upgrade. Once complete and fully operational, the old 69-kV lines will be removed.

**Findings:** BPA has determined that the proposed action complies with Section 1021.410 and Appendix B of Subpart D of the Department of Energy (DOE) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Regulations (57 Fed. Reg. 1512.2, January 1, 1997). The proposed action does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal. The proposal is not connected (40 C.F.R. 1508.25 (a)(1)) to other actions with potentially significant impacts, is not related to other proposed actions with cumulatively significant impacts (40 C.F.R. 1508.25 (a)(2)), and is not precluded by 40 C.F.R. 1506.1 or 10 C.F.R. 1021.211. Moreover, the proposed action would not (i) threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health; (ii) require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities; (iii) disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act-excluded petroleum and natural gas products that pre-exist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases; or (iv) adversely affect environmentally sensitive resources.

Contingent upon concurrence by both the Washington and Oregon State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO), the proposed action will meet the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act.

A review of Federally listed species recorded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries office (NOAA Fisheries) indicated the potential presence of Middle Columbia River Steelhead (threatened), bull trout (threatened), and bald eagle (threatened). Botanical and wildlife surveys have been completed in the field. Because there is not suitable habitat available for these species and there would be no activity associated with this project that will disturb critical habitat, the proposed action would have no effect upon bull trout and Middle Columbia River Steelhead. The USFWS also concurred that bald eagle use and occurrence in the area is very low and the proposed action is not likely to adversely affect bald eagles.

There are no wetlands or floodplains that will be impacted by this proposal.

Contingent upon the satisfactory completion of the consultation with Oregon and Washington SHPO and adoption of the attached list of mitigation actions, we determine that the proposed action may be categorically excluded from further NEPA review and documentation.

/s/ Donald Rose 5-16-05

Donald L. Rose  
Environmental Project Lead - KEC

CONCUR: /s/ Kathy Pierce  
Kathryn S. Pierce  
NEPA Compliance Officer

DATE: 5-16-05

Attachments:  
Mitigation Requirements

**ATTACHMENT****Construction Mitigation Requirements for  
Walla Walla-Pendleton and PacifiCorps Tie Line Upgrade****Cultural resources:**

1. Should archaeological materials be unexpectedly encountered during construction of the project, stop work and notify the COTR. A qualified archaeologist should immediately be notified and an evaluation made and a treatment plan developed should the find be significant.

**Vegetation protection and noxious weeds:**

2. Restrict construction activities to the area needed to work effectively. Construction crews would be instructed to restrict vehicles to designated areas and existing roads as much as possible.
3. Designated areas would be used to store equipment and supplies. The contractor would follow applicable state and federal regulations to protect plant communities.
4. After construction, disturbed areas not needed for ongoing access or maintenance should be promptly reseeded with native species where possible.
5. Seed mix for revegetation should contain a mixture of the common native bunchgrasses and dryland species present in the Project area. Native seed is commercially available for this area.
6. Do not spread noxious weed seeds:
  - Certify in writing that all vehicles, equipment, and machinery are free of all weeds including seeds before moving the equipment into the construction area. The COTR will inspect vehicles prior to bringing them on site.
  - When an area contaminated by weeds is encountered on, or off of, the construction site, use caution to prevent the spreading of weeds to other areas. This may include cleaning the equipment with high-pressure water prior to moving from one work site to another, or installing wheel washes. Notify the COTR as to the location of the noxious weeds.
7. Use only weed free materials, or inert materials for mulching and for erosion control.

**Erosion control and land use:**

8. Require dust abatement on road and construction site, if necessary.
9. Appropriate erosion and sediment control best management practices will be utilized for the protection of water resources.
10. Provide a schedule of construction activities to all landowners/agencies along the corridor that could be affected by construction.

11. Plan and schedule construction activities, when practical, to minimize temporary disturbance, displacement of crops, and interference with farming activities.
12. Keep gates in as found condition (opened or closed). Coordinate construction sequence with landowner so that livestock may be moved if necessary.

### **Public Health and Safety**

13. Limit construction to daytime hours for noise abatement.
14. No equipment with un-muffled exhaust is allowed. Fit all equipment with sound-control devices that are as effective as the original equipment.
15. Should contaminated media be unexpectedly encountered during construction of the project, stop work and notify the COTR. Contaminated media include materials that are potentially harmful to the environment or human health and safety. Work will proceed only after measures approved by the WDOE are put in place to prevent the spread of contaminated materials and protect the health and safety of workers.
16. Equip vehicles with fire suppression equipment, including a shovel, fire extinguisher, and bladder or water supply.
17. Equip construction vehicles with spill containment kits able to respond to construction related spills.