

Categorical Exclusion Documentation
 U.S. Department of the Interior
 Bureau of Land Management, Spokane District
 Border Field Office
 1103 North Fancher Road
 Spokane Valley, Washington 99212

A. Background

BLM Office: Border Field Office

Lease/Serial/Case File No.: WAOR 68394

NEPA Log Number: DOI-BLM-OR-135-2015-0010

Proposed Action Title: Avista 230 kV transmission line right-of-way (ROW)

Location of Proposed Action: See Exhibits A-Main, A-1, and A-2

Willamette Meridian, Franklin County, Washington

- T. 10 N., R. 31 E., sec. 2, SW¹/₄SW¹/₄;
- T. 10 N., R. 31 E., sec. 14, E¹/₂NE¹/₄;
- T. 10 N., R. 31 E., sec. 24, NE¹/₄NW¹/₄ and E¹/₂;
- T. 11 N., R. 31 E., sec. 20, E¹/₂;
- T. 11 N., R. 31 E., sec. 28, SW¹/₄NE¹/₄, E¹/₂NW¹/₄, W¹/₂SE¹/₄, and SE¹/₄SE¹/₄;
- T. 11 N., R. 31 E., sec. 34, W¹/₂NW¹/₄, N¹/₂SW¹/₄, SE¹/₄SW¹/₄, and SW¹/₄SE¹/₄.

Willamette Meridian, Grant County, Washington

- T. 15 N., R. 27 E., sec. 12, S¹/₂NE¹/₄ and N¹/₂SE¹/₄.

Proposed Action:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is proposing to renew a right-of-way grant authorizing Avista Corporation to operate and maintain a transmission line. Avista Corporation submitted an application requesting to renew a right-of-way authorization for an aerial 230 kV transmission line across public lands in Franklin and Grant Counties, Washington. A majority of the transmission line crosses the Juniper Dunes Recreation Area with a small portion travelling through the east side of the Saddle Mountain area. This transmission line serves the general area from Othello to Walla Walla. This line is part of the overall grid for the mid-Columbia system which is an interconnection with the Bonneville Power Administration Transmission Line.

The transmission line was built in 1962 and the right-of-way was issued on November 7, 1963 under the Act of March 4, 1911 which allowed the BLM to authorize rights-of-way on behalf of other federal agencies.

Current regulations at 43 CFR 2800 require the BLM to issue the right-of-way under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of October 21, 1976. BLM will only issue a right-of-way for public lands managed by BLM. BLM no longer authorizes uses on other federal lands; Avista will need to obtain authorizations from other federal



agencies (U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Reclamation) and a private individual.

The original 1963 right-of-way included the following lands:

Willamette Meridian, Adams County, Washington

T. 15 N., R. 28 E., sec. 17, S $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$;
T. 15 N., R. 28 E., sec. 25, N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ and SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$.

Willamette Meridian, Franklin County, Washington

T. 10 N., R. 31 E., sec. 2, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$;
T. 10 N., R. 31 E., sec. 14, E $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$;
T. 10 N., R. 31 E., sec. 24, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ and E $\frac{1}{2}$;
T. 11 N., R. 30 E., sec. 18; NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$;
T. 11 N., R. 31 E., sec. 20, E $\frac{1}{2}$;
T. 11 N., R. 31 E., sec. 28, SW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, E $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, W $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$, and SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$;
T. 11 N., R. 31 E., sec. 34, W $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, N $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, and SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$.
T. 12 N., R. 31 E., sec. 30, lots 1-4;
T. 14 N., R. 28 E., sec. 1, E $\frac{1}{2}$ E $\frac{1}{2}$;
T. 14 N., R. 28 E., sec. 12, E $\frac{1}{2}$ E $\frac{1}{2}$;
T. 14 N., R. 29 E., sec. 34, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$.

Willamette Meridian, Grant County, Washington

T. 15 N., R. 27 E., sec. 5, lot 3, S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, and N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$;
T. 15 N., R. 27 E., sec. 12, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, and N $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$;
T. 16 N., R. 23 E., sec. 15, W $\frac{1}{2}$;
T. 16 N., R. 23 E., sec. 22, NW $\frac{1}{4}$, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, and E $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$;
T. 16 N., R. 24 E., sec. 26, NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$ and E $\frac{1}{2}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$;
T. 16 N., R. 24 E., sec. 30, lot 2, S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, and SE $\frac{1}{4}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$;
T. 16 N., R. 25 E., sec. 26, N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$;
T. 16 N., R. 25 E., sec. 27, N $\frac{1}{2}$ N $\frac{1}{2}$;
T. 16 N., R. 25 E., sec. 28, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$ and S $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$;
T. 16 N., R. 25 E., sec. 30, lot 3, NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$, and NE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$;
T. 16 N., R. 26 E., sec. 20, S $\frac{1}{2}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$;
T. 16 N., R. 26 E., sec. 22, SE $\frac{1}{4}$ SE $\frac{1}{4}$.

The right-of-way authorization will be renewed over only public lands currently managed by the BLM.

The right-of-way is approximately 26,604 feet long and 100 feet wide for a total of 61.1 acres. No new rights will be issued or new ground disturbance approved as a result of this administrative action. The terms of the grant will be 30 years and will expire on December 31, 2044.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: Spokane Resource Management Plan (RMP)

Date Approved/Amended: Approved 1987/Amended 1992

The proposed action is in conformance with the Spokane RMP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decision(s): Keep public lands open for exploration/development of mineral

resources, rights-of-way, access, and other public purposes with consideration to mitigate designated resource concerns (BLM 1987, p. 12).

C. Compliance with NEPA

The proposed action is categorically excluded from further documentation in an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. The proposed action is within the category of actions at 516 DM 11.9.E (11): Conversion of existing right-of-way grants to Title V grants or existing leases to FLPMA Section 302(b) leases where no new facilities or changes are needed.

This categorical exclusion is appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 43 CFR 46.215 apply, as described below:

a. The proposed action would not have significant impacts on public health or safety.

The renewal of this right-of-way will have no new or significant impacts on health or public safety. The transmission line has existed since 1962. No additional ground disturbance will be approved as a result of this action; therefore issuing the right-of-way as proposed would not have an impact on public health or safety.

b. The proposed action would not have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.

There will be no new ground disturbance as a result of this renewal of an existing transmission line and there will be no significant impacts on natural resources and unique geographic characteristics.

c. The proposed action would not have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].

The approval of this right-of-way renewal would not have any environmental effects that are highly controversial or involve unresolved conflicts. The effects of issuing a right-of-way to authorize operation and maintenance of an existing transmission line are well understood.

d. The proposed action would not have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks. The effects of issuing a right-of-way to authorize operation and maintenance of an existing transmission line are well understood.

e. The proposed action would not establish a precedent for future actions or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects. Issuing a right-of-way for continued operation of an existing transmission line would not set a precedent for any future action.

f. The proposed action would not have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects. The existing Avista transmission line crosses land management boundaries, including lands managed by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the

Bureau of Reclamation, and private land. The renewal of the right-of-way for this established transmission line does have a direct relationship to other actions such as authorizations from other land management agencies. However, this proposed action does not have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects. Operation and maintenance of the transmission line would result in a continuation of impacts that have been ongoing since 1962 when the line was constructed. No new or additional impacts that would result in cumulatively significant impacts are predicted to occur as a result of continued operations.

g. The proposed action would not have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by the bureau. Approving of this right-of-way renewal will entail no new rights or additional ground disturbance as a result of this action. The proposed action of approving this would not have an impact on properties listed or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places.

h. The proposed action would not have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated critical habitat for these species. The proposed action would not have any new or significant impacts to threatened, endangered, or proposed species or designated critical habitat. The proposed action would not change the amount or suitability of wildlife habitat in the project area as this is an existing right-of-way and no new activities are being proposed or permitted. Therefore, no effects to species listed, proposed to be listed, or their designated critical habitat were identified for the proposed action.

i. The proposed action would not violate any Federal, State, local, or tribal laws or other requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. The right-of-way grant will include stipulations for the protection of the environment.

j. The proposed action would not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).

k. The proposed action would not limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007). There are no identified sacred, ceremonial or religious Indian sites within the area of the proposed action.

l. The proposed action would not contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112) . The right-of-way grant will include standard stipulations that address the control of noxious weeds and invasive species.

D. Signature

/s/ Lindsey Babcock
Lindsey Babcock
Field Manager

8/17/2015
Date

E. Contact Person & Reviewers

For additional information concerning this Categorical Review, contact Heidi Lee Honner, Realty Specialist, at 509-536-1216.

Reviewers	Resource	Initials	Date
Jason Lowe	Wildlife, Special Status Wildlife	JL	8/17/15
J.A. Vacca	Wildlife, Special Status Wildlife	JAV	8/17/15
Kim Frymire	Botany, Special Status Plants	KDF	8/17/15
Molly Boyter	Botany, Special Status Plants	mjb	8/17/15
Anne Boyd	Historic/Cultural	AB	8/17/15
Katherine Farrell	NEPA	KF	8/13/2015
Heidi Lee Honner	Lands and Realty	HLH	8/14/2015

Note: A separate decision document has been prepared for the action covered by this CX.