

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: G0520/Starvation Ridge and G0538/Riley II Solar Interconnection

Project No.: G0520 and G0538

Project Manager: Rasha Kroonen—TEP-TPP-1

Location: Harney County, Oregon

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

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to interconnect two 20-megawatt (MW) solar development projects to BPA's electrical transmission system. The solar developer is New Sun Energy Transmission Company, LLC. The two solar projects would share one point of interconnection along BPA's Brasada-Harney-No.1 transmission line. BPA's proposed action to support the interconnection request consists of installing a tap facility to connect the customer's transmission line to BPA's grid, along with minimal upgrades to the Harney Substation and the Brasada-Harney-No.1 transmission line.

For the tap installation, four new wood pole H-frame structures (one 45-foot-tall, three 65-foot-tall), and three new disconnect switches (30-foot-tall) would be constructed. Excavation for the new H-frame structures would be to a maximum depth of 10 feet, and approximately 5 feet for the switches. Crushed rock would be used to backfill around the newly set poles and granular fill would be used to backfill around the switches.

Approximately one mile of overhead fiber would be installed from the tap location to a new 30-foot-tall wood pole, which would be installed on the north side of Harney Substation. Excavation for this pole would be to a maximum depth of 6 feet. At that point, the fiber would be routed underground for approximately 100 feet into the substation.

In support of the interconnection, minor upgrades to the transmission line would be done, such as replacement of guy wires at one dead-end structure, one H-frame structure replacement, and installation of a steel cross brace on one H-frame structure.

BPA would install a microwave antenna on New Sun's radio tower at their collector station, as well as a wave guide connecting the antenna to the indoor equipment. BPA control meters would be installed within New Sun's control house.

Staging of materials would occur at Harney Substation, in the right-of-way (ROW) at the interconnection location, and also at a gravel quarry along Highway 20, east of Riley, Oregon.

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/ Beth Belanger

Beth Belanger
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Doug Corkran

Doug Corkran
Acting Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: July 1, 2019

Attachments: Environmental Checklist
NE Memo

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: G0520/Starvation Ridge and G0538/Harney II Solar Interconnections

Project Site Description

The proposed project area is in Harney County, Oregon, near the town of Harney, Oregon. The project is occurring in Sections 4 and 9 of Township 24 South, Range 30 East. The host and adjacent parcels are undeveloped, except for the transmission right-of-way. The neighboring parcels are a mix of private, State, and Federal ownership. The surrounding topography in the area consists of undulating hillsides. The nearest water body is Sage Hen Creek, located approximately one mile south of the proposed tap location and 0.5 miles south of Harney Substation.

The vegetation at the project site consists mostly of sagebrush (*Artemisia* sp.), yellow rabbit brush (*Ericameria* sp.), and unidentified grasses.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> On June 26, 2018, the Burns Paiute Tribe, Fort McDermitt Paiute-Shoshone Tribe, Klamath Tribes, and Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) were initially notified of the proposed project and provided a map of the project area. On May 30, 2019, BPA submitted a no effect determination letter to the consulting parties. On June 6, 2019, SHPO concurred with BPA's determination. As of June 30, 2019, the remaining consulting parties have not responded.</p>		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> During construction, all appropriate Best Management Practices would be used to implement site-specific erosion and sediment control. Excavated spoils would be in a BPA-approved location. All disturbed areas would be stabilized and seeded.</p>		
3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> There are no Federal/state-listed plants at the project locations; therefore, there would be no impacts to special-status plants.</p> <p>Invasive weeds, such as Russian thistle, would be appropriately controlled prior to construction.</p> <p>Additionally, construction vehicles and equipment would be required to be cleaned before entering the project location.</p>		
4. Wildlife (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> There are no Federal/state special-status species occurrence records in the project area, nor were any special-status species or habitats observed during a site visit. There would be no impacts to special-status or federally-listed wildlife. Construction activities may temporarily displace non-listed wildlife but there would be no long-term impacts to wildlife.</p>		

5. **Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish**

(including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)



Explanation: The project area and adjacent areas do not have any water bodies, floodplains, or fish; therefore, there would be no impacts.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: The project area and adjacent areas do not have wetlands; therefore, there would be no impacts.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: The project is unlikely to impact groundwater and aquifers. The maximum depth of disturbance for the project would be ten feet. The nearest Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 10 Sole Source Aquifer is approximately 200 miles to the east of the project location.

Spill prevention measures would be utilized during construction activities. The project would not provide a pathway for groundwater contamination.

8. **Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas**



Explanation: The land use would not change at the project site. Nor is the project within, or near, any specially-designated area, such as National Scenic Rivers.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The visual quality would be consistent with the existing use of the transmission right-of-way corridor. There would be no significant change to the visual quality.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions would occur during construction; however, there would be no significant changes to air quality during or after construction.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: The nearest residences are approximately 0.25 miles away. Construction noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise would not change.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: During project activities, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Project activities would not impact human health or safety.

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, if necessary:

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: BPA would work closely with the landowners to provide adequate notification of construction timing and potential controls for invasive plants.

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

Signed: /s/ Beth Belanger
Beth Belanger, ECT-4
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC

Date: July 1, 2019