

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: AT&T Bellingham LTE Upgrade

Project Manager: Chuck Wedick – TELP-TTP-3

Location: Whatcom County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.19 Microwave, meteorological and radio towers

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow the AT&T corporation to make upgrades to antennas and associated equipment within their existing communications facility located on structure 74/2 of the Monroe-Custer No. 1 240 kV transmission line. Work would include removing one existing panel antenna, replacing four existing panel antenna with new antenna, replacing four existing tower mounted amplifiers with four new tower mounted amplifiers, and installing two new coax cables. Two existing remote radio heads (RRH) would be replaced with new RRHs and two new RRHs would be added. Eight existing diplexer units would be replaced with new diplexers. A 5G upgrade kit would be added. An existing equipment cabinet would be replaced with a new cabinet. Additionally a breaker, converter shelf, and four modals would be added. A new H-frame would be added on the existing concrete pad to support new equipment. No ground disturbance would occur with this project. Equipment used would likely include a bucket truck, crane, pickup trucks, and hand tools as necessary.

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/ Nicholas Johnson

Nicholas Johnson

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

<u>/s/ Sarah T. Biegel</u>	<u>November 17, 2021</u>
Sarah T. Biegel	Date
NEPA Compliance Officer	

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: AT&T Bellingham LTE Upgrade

Project Site Description

The project is located in Whatcom County, Washington (Township 38 North, Range 3 East, and Section 14). Proposed actions would occur within the BPA transmission easement right-of-way (ROW) and the existing equipment facility in the footprint of structure 74/2 of the Monroe-Custer No. 1 240 kV transmission line. The site is located near low-density housing and forest. Access to the site is provided by an unimproved BPA access road.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA historian review found the project had no potential to cause effects to historic resources.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance would occur with this project.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no known occurrences of special-status plants in the project area. Some vegetation may be impacted accessing the transmission structure; however, use of the access road would minimize effects to local vegetation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No known occurrences of threatened or endangered wildlife are located within the project areas. Project locations are not located within any defined critical habitat areas. Local wildlife could be momentarily disrupted during the short 1-2 day installation period at both locations. No prolonged disruptions would occur post-project completion.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is not located in water bodies or floodplains. Project actions would not impact nearby water resources

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is not located within or adjacent to wetlands. The nearest wetland is approximately 1,000 feet southeast and would not be affected.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance would occur with this project. There would be no impact to groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project actions are co-located within existing wireless communication facilities within BPA transmission ROWs. Land use would remain the same.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Visual quality would remain the same as existing conditions. Project actions would replace existing equipment with similar size and dimensions.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project actions could create some dust associated with vehicle traffic on ROW roads and general construction actions. Air quality impacts from dust would be relatively minimal and short in duration.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project actions would have noise associated with the general construction equipment used to replace the equipment. Noise would be occurring during daylight hours and occur for one to two days per location.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Crews would follow all applicable health and safety protocols.

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: The AT&T Corporation has existing access and use rights through BPA's existing easements. No landowner notification or coordination would be needed for the proposed actions. BPA's real property services group would be the primary point of contact concerning any adjacent landowner concerns.

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

Signed: /s/ Nicholas Johnson November 17, 2021
Nicholas Johnson, ECT – 4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist