

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Tacoma-Covington No. 3 and 4 Wireless Antenna and Fiber Upgrades

Project Manager: Jonathan Toobian, TELP-TPP-3

Location: King County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way; B1.19 Microwave, meteorological and radio towers

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow the Verizon Corporation to replace existing wireless communication antennas and equipment on their Lea Hill facility which is collocated on BPA's Tacoma-Covington No. 3 and 4 double-circuit 230 kV transmission line structure 13/3. Additionally, Verizon would install a new underground fiber optic cable conduit within the Tacoma-Covington No. 3 and 4 right-of-way.

Nine existing antennas and associated communication hardware located at the top of the structure would be replaced with six new antennas and associated communication hardware. Approximately 140 feet of 4-inch fiber optic cable conduit would be installed in a trench running from the existing equipment yard located in the structure footprint to the east terminating near the edge of the paved road and sidewalk. The conduit would be installed approximately 36 inches below ground. An access vault (placed within a 17-inch wide by 30-inch long by 36-inch deep hole) would be located at the end of the conduit adjacent to the sidewalk. Ground disturbance would be confined to the vault hole and an area about 3 feet wide by the entire length of the conduit. Fill would be placed back into the trench post fiber conduit installation upon project completion. Equipment used would likely include pickup trucks, a bucket truck, hand tools, and a trenching machine.

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:

/s/ Sarah. T Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

September 3, 2021

Date

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: Tacoma-Covington No. 3 and 4 Wireless Antenna and Fiber Upgrades

Project Site Description

The project site is located within King County, Washington, Township 21 North, Range 5 East, and Section 4. Work would occur on structure 13/3 of Tacoma-Covington No. 3 and 4 double-circuit transmission line and within the transmission line rights-of-way easement. The underlying land within the easement is privately owned by the Bifrost Gate homeowners association. The site is surrounded by residential areas to the north, south, and west with a tree farm located to the northeast. A freshwater emergent wetland is located approximately 300 feet to the east, no other water resources are located within the project area. A paved road, 127th Place Southeast, provides access to project site and is located about 60 feet west of the structure. There is a paved driveway that provides access to the residential homes located to the south of the project area. The project site is primarily vegetated with grasses and low growing forbs.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed actions would have no potential to effect cultural resources. BPA's cultural staff filed a report with the findings that this project would have no adverse effect to historic properties, which the Washington SHPO concurred with on August 9th, 2021.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground disturbance would be confined to the vault pit and the trench area, which is about 3 feet wide by approximately 140 feet in length. Some insignificant compaction of soils may occur due to equipment driving around the site.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No known occurrences of special-status plants are located with the project area. The projects' locations are mostly graveled and all have been previously disturbed. The project would have no impacts to any non-special-status plants. To prevent the spread of noxious weeds, the vehicles and equipment would be required to be cleaned before entering the project location.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No known occurrences of special-status wildlife are located within the project area.

The project location is not located within any defined critical habitat. Local wildlife could be momentarily disrupted during the short installation period at the project location. If any active nests are found on the structures prior to construction, the construction would be delayed until the nest is unoccupied.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project actions would not be located within waterways, riparian areas, floodplains, or fish habitat.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Per the USGS Soil Survey, the project location is located near hydric soils; however, the sites exhibit upland vegetation. The project location is not located directly within known wetland areas. A freshwater emergent wetland exists approximately 300 feet east and would not be impacted by proposed project activities. Crews would avoid the wetland area and only access the site from the east.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project actions would not impact groundwater resources.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project actions are located within a BPA ROW easement. 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: 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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project actions would have noise associated with the general construction equipment used to conduct the project. Noise would occur during daylight hours and be relatively short in duration.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Crews would follow all applicable health and safety protocols. There would be no impact to human health and 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: 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 project site is located in the existing BPA easement ROW. Verizon has an existing land use and access agreement with BPA and the underlying property owner. Verizon would inform the Bifrost Gate HOA of the proposed actions prior to conducting work. No other notifications, involvement, or coordination would be needed.

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 September 3, 2021
Nicholas Johnson, ECT – 4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist