

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Schultz-Wautoma No. 1 Series Capacitor Bank Installation

Project No.: P03259

Project Manager: Jay A. Chester, TEPS-TPP-1

Location: Benton and Kittitas counties, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.13 Pathways, short access roads, and rail lines; B1.24 Property transfers; B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities; B4.11 Electric power substations and interconnection facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to install a new series capacitor bank and associated switching and protective equipment at BPA's Wautoma Substation in Benton County, Washington (Township 12 North, Range 24 East, Sections 20 and 21). Minor equipment upgrades and modifications would also occur at BPA's Schultz Substation in Kittitas County, Washington (Township 19 North, Range 19 East, Section 19). The project would compensate the 500-kilovolt (kV) Schultz-Wautoma No. 1 transmission line and increase available transfer capability (ATC) in the region, which would thereby improve operations and maintenance flexibility, ensure transmission system reliability, and allow BPA to accommodate transmission service requests for the South of Allston and I-5 Corridor pathways.

Wautoma Substation

BPA would install a new series capacitor bank and associated switching and protective equipment, including three capacitors, three surge arrestors, three capacitor voltage transformers, and rigid buswork. Electronic protection and control equipment would be upgraded within existing equipment cabinets inside the control house. To accommodate the new outdoor equipment, the substation yard would be expanded by approximately 5 acres to the northeast. Expanding the substation yard would require rerouting existing access roads and the perimeter security fencing, removing dead-end structure 62/2 on the Schultz-Wautoma No. 1 transmission line, and then excavating up to 15 feet deep (approximately 50,000 cubic yards of material). To maintain standard property line setback, BPA would acquire fee ownership of two property parcels (approximately 2.9 acres total) north of the substation.

Within the expansion area, BPA would install grounding, standard concrete footings for the new substation equipment and a new dead-end structure 62/2, a new pre-cast trench system to house cable and piping, and perimeter security fencing. The expanded substation area would also require additional stormwater infrastructure to manage runoff, including underground piping, a new approximately 7,000-square-foot detention pond covered with rock mulch, and outfalls located west of the substation. The substation yard would be backfilled using previously-excavated soils, compacted and graded flat, and resurfaced with crushed rock. Approximately 3,000 feet of gravel access roads would be relocated, reconstructed, or newly constructed around

the exterior perimeter of the expanded substation yard. Excess soils (approximately 40,000 cubic yards) would be placed south of the existing substation yard, compacted, and stabilized with rock mulch.

Completion of the project would require the use of heavy equipment, such as an excavator, dump truck, grader, compactor, crane, and boom truck. BPA would create an approximately 2.5 acre materials and equipment staging area north of Wautoma Substation, which would require grading and covering the area in gravel and then installing temporary security fencing, electric service lines, and job trailers. Following completion of the project, the gravel would likely be left in place.

Schultz Substation

Inside the existing Schultz Substation control house, BPA would upgrade electronic protection and control equipment associated with the Schultz-Wautoma No. 1 transmission line. In the substation yard, BPA would examine and modify fill pressures within 500-kV breakers (12 total) to achieve an appropriate rating. If required, pressure gauges would be replaced and the breakers would be charged to appropriate levels.

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/ W. Walker Stinnette

W. Walker Stinnette
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Carol P. Leiter

Carol P. Leiter
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange January 4, 2022
Katey C. Grange 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: Schultz-Wautoma No. 1 Series Capacitor Bank Installation

Project Site Description

The project site is located at BPA's Wautoma Substation in Benton County, Washington (Township 12 North, Range 24 East, Sections 20 and 21). The project site includes portions of the energized substation yard, as well as areas north, east, and south of the yard where various proposed actions would occur. The energized substation yard and existing gravel access roads are previously-disturbed and covered in crushed rock with little to no vegetation, while the remainder of the project site consists of ecologically degraded pasture land characterized by a mix of low-growing, primarily non-native weeds interspersed with few native species. Land surrounding the project site is largely undeveloped pasture land, with six high voltage transmission lines. The Warden soil series, which is not hydric, is mapped within work areas, and no wetlands are present. Dry Creek, an intermittent stream with multiple braided channels, is located approximately 500 feet south of Wautoma Substation, and the stream's associated floodplain extends to within approximately 150 feet south of the substation. All proposed construction activities would occur on BPA fee-owned property, and BPA would acquire two additional parcels north of Wautoma Substation that are also currently used for grazing cattle and are characterized by the same vegetation and soils.

All actions proposed at BPA's Schultz Substation in Kittitas County, Washington (Township 19 North, Range 19 East, Section 19) would occur inside the control house or within the existing substation yard.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: On May 29, 2019, BPA initiated National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 consultation with the following parties:

- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
- Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP)

BPA conducted background research and an intensive field survey of the Area of Potential Effects (APE). No previously recorded archaeological resources were located within the APE, and no new archaeological resources were identified during the archaeological field survey. The following five transmission lines are located within the APE and are considered eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places: Hanford-Wautoma No. 1 and No. 2, Wine Country-Midway No. 1, Wautoma-Rock Creek No. 1, and Wautoma-Knight No. 1 transmission lines. However, the proposed undertaking would not alter the integrity or

eligibility of any of the transmission lines. Therefore, BPA determined on May 11, 2020, that the proposed undertaking would result in no historic properties affected (BPA CR Project No.: WA 2019 100; DAHP Log No.: 2019-05-03896-BPA). On May 12, 2020, DHAP concurred with BPA's determination. No other comments were received.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA would require that work be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Geology and soils within and around Wautoma Substation were previously disturbed during construction of the existing substation yard, access roads, and 500-kV transmission lines. Permanent soil impacts would occur where the ground surface would be permanently excavated, compacted, and/or covered in gravel, including the expanded substation yard, the materials and equipment staging area, new access roads, the new detention pond, and the excess soils deposit. Minor soil compaction could also occur due to vehicle and equipment use. Soils that would be temporarily disturbed by the proposed action would stabilize as vegetation is reestablished and would eventually return to pre-existing conditions following completion of the project. Standard construction best management practices (BMPs) would prevent erosion and sedimentation.

Notes:

- Implement a BPA-approved Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), with an associated Erosion and Sediment Control Plan (ESCP), that is guided by Washington Department of Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Eastern Washington.
- Deposit excess soils south of the existing substation yard, and ensure excess soils are compacted and stabilized with rock mulch.
- Permanently retain gravel surfacing of the materials and equipment staging area following completion of the project to prevent erosion and sedimentation of disturbed soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The proposed action would require development of ecologically degraded pasture land around Wautoma Substation, which would include permanently clearing a mix of low-growing vegetation primarily consisting of non-native weeds with few native species. Permanent vegetation impacts would occur where the ground surface would be permanently excavated, compacted, and/or covered in gravel, including the expanded substation yard, the materials and equipment staging area, new access roads, the new detention pond, and the excess soils deposit. Additional construction-related activities could temporarily crush or strip vegetation in small areas. Temporarily disturbed areas would stabilize as vegetation is reestablished and would eventually return to pre-existing conditions following completion of the project. Standard construction BMPs would minimize the spread of noxious weeds. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status plant species near the project site, and no such species are expected to occur at the site.

Notes:

- Implement a BPA-approved SWPPP, with an associated ESCP, that is guided by Washington Department of Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Eastern Washington.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary disruption of normal wildlife behavior could occur from elevated noise and human presence during construction. The proposed action would require development of ecologically degraded pasture land around Wautoma Substation that is not considered suitable habitat for special-status wildlife species, and no such species are expected to occur in the project site vicinity.

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

Potential for Significance No with Conditions

Explanation: The proposed action includes installation of stormwater management infrastructure, which would be built in accordance with all applicable local, state, and Federal regulations. Standard construction BMPs would prevent indirect impacts to Dry Creek and its associated floodplain. No fish-bearing streams are present within 1,000 feet of the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies and floodplains and would have no effect on special-status fish species or habitats.

Notes:

- Implement a BPA-approved SWPPP, with an associated ESCP, that is guided by Washington Department of Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Eastern Washington.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present within the project site. Standard construction BMPs would prevent indirect impacts to off-site wetlands, if present. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact wetlands.

Notes:

- Implement a BPA-approved SWPPP, with an associated ESCP, that is guided by Washington Department of Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Eastern Washington.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground disturbance is unlikely to reach depths to groundwater and no new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers are proposed. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action could temporarily impact cattle grazing due to construction noise, increased construction traffic, access restrictions, and ground disturbance; although the impact would be minor. The substation expansion, materials and equipment staging area development, access road work, and excess soil deposit would permanently change land use in areas that are currently undeveloped pasture land. All of the permanent land use changes would occur on BPA fee-owned property, and there would be no permanent land

use impacts to adjacent properties. No specially-designated areas would be impacted by the proposed action.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would cause a perceptible change in the appearance of the project site. During construction, the presence of construction equipment and general construction activities, including vegetation disturbance, would cause temporary visual impacts. Expanding the substation, installing new substation equipment, and adding gravel to the materials and equipment staging area, access roads, detention pond, and excess soil deposit would cause new permanent visual changes. These permanent changes would be consistent with the existing visual quality of the area, and the project site is not located in a visually-sensitive area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would cause a minor and temporary increase in dust and vehicle emissions in the local area from general construction activities. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the proposed action.

Notes:

- Implement dust suppression measures as identified in the SWPPP and associated ESCP.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During construction, use of vehicles and equipment and general construction activities would create noise above current ambient conditions. Noise impacts would be temporary and intermittent and would only occur during typical working hours (approximately 7 AM to 7 PM). There are no noise-sensitive receptors within one mile of the project site, and there would be no long-term change in ambient noise following completion of the project.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction would be completed by trained professionals who would follow all applicable safety precautions as detailed in a site-specific Safety Plan, which would be maintained on-site during construction and updated, as needed. The proposed action would not be expected to impact 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: BPA has been coordinating with an adjacent property owner to purchase two parcels (approximately 2.9 acres total) north of Wautoma Substation All proposed construction activities would occur on BPA fee-owned property. No other landowner notification, involvement, or coordination would be required.

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

Signed: /s/ W. Walker Stinnette January 4, 2022
W. Walker Stinnette, EC-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
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