

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Stampede Pass VHF Antenna and Radio Equipment

Project Manager: Courtney Kimmel, TEPF-CSB-2

Location: Kittitas 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 install a very high frequency (VHF) whip antenna on an existing 120-foot-tall communications tower, owned by Vertical Bridge. The new antenna would be used to test and verify functioning of the new VHF radio system for the Puget Sound region for the Mobile Radio Essential Data Infrastructure (MREDI) Program. New coaxial cable would also be installed on the tower to connect the VHF whip antenna to equipment within the existing equipment building. The coaxial cable would run through an existing wall port and be grounded to the existing ground bar near the waveguide entrance. Four new equipment racks and the associated VHF radio repeaters would be installed in the Vertical Bridge equipment building.

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
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

<u>Sarah T. Biegel</u>	<u>September 7, 2022</u>
Sarah T. Biegel	Date
NEPA Compliance Officer	

Attachment: 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.

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Project Site Description

The Stampede Pass Radio Site is in Kittitas County, Washington, approximately eight miles northwest of the City of Easton. The site is located in the Wenatchee National Forest in Section 2, Township 20 North, Range 12 East. The elevation is 4,500 feet. The location is used as a communications site, currently developed with seven radio towers and six equipment buildings. The surrounding area is a Douglas-fir dominated forest in various stages of succession. The Yakima River is 1.8 miles to the northeast, with Stampede Creek located 0.35 miles northwest of the project location.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA cultural staff have reviewed the proposed project activities and have determined that the proposed activities have no potential to cause effects to historic or cultural resources.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance is proposed for the project; therefore, there would be no impacts to geology or soil.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is graveled and devoid of vegetation; therefore, there would be no impacts to special-status plant species.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project would produce short-term intermittent noise that may cause temporary disturbance to adjacent wildlife; however, wildlife would likely reoccupy the area upon construction completion. The project area is within designated critical habitat for Northern spotted owls, and there are historical occurrence records within a five mile radius of the project location. The project activities are proposed to occur in October, outside of the owl's nesting season. No trees are proposed for removal. Additionally, no cranes or large

equipment is needed for the work. Project activities would not remove habitat, nor would they disrupt the Northern spotted owls' breeding season. The project area does not contain other Federal or state-listed special-status species or habitats that would be impacted by the proposed project activities.

Notes:

- Work cannot occur between February and September without consulting with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no water bodies, floodplains, or fish, in or near the project location; therefore, there would be no impacts to these resources.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands at the project location; therefore, there would be no impacts to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance is proposed for the project; therefore, there would be no impacts to groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project location is an existing communications site. The proposed work would not impact land use or specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The visual quality would be consistent with the existing use of the radio towers; therefore, there would be no substantial change to the visual quality at the project locations.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

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

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No or No with Conditions

Explanation: Construction noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise would not change.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

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: 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 is coordinating with Vertical Bridge, the tower owner and U.S. Forest Service, the underlying landowner.

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 September 7, 2022
Beth Belanger Date
Environmental Protection Specialist