

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Clark PUD T-Mobile Electric Service Upgrade at Sifton Substation

Project No.: 20220229

Project Manager: Billie Woodman – TERR-ROSS/MHQA

Location: Clark County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.9 Multiple Uses of Powerline Rights-of-Way

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to allow Clark Public Utilities to install a new 200 amp underground electric service line to upgrade the electrical service for the existing T-Mobile cellular communications site located within BPA's fee-owned property at the Sifton Substation in Clark County, WA. Clark PUD would excavate a trench parallel and immediately adjacent to the east edge of the BPA access road to Sifton Substation within the Sifton-Fishers Road No. 1 and Sifton Tap to North Bonneville-Ross right-of-way (ROW). A backhoe or small excavator would be utilized to dig the trench approximately 2 feet wide by 3 to 4 feet deep. The trench would be approximately 950 feet long. Alternatively, directional boring may be used in lieu of an excavator or backhoe. Conduit and electrical cables would be installed in the trench and backfilled with the removed material. Clark PUD would also install an isolation transformer and a new meter approximately 100 feet west of the substation fence and connect it to the control house with the wiring running through conduits in a trench running east-west.

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/ Doug Corkran

Doug Corkran, ECT-4
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
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.

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Project Site Description

The project would occur along the edge of the existing, Sifton-Fishers Road No. 1 and Sifton Tap to North Bonneville-Ross ROW transmission line ROW corridor that extends south from the Sifton Substation in Clark County. The short project ROW corridor crosses a relatively flat landscape surrounded by suburban residential developments. The area within the ROW is actively farmed for hay, with housing developments on either side.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area was previously surveyed in 2007 by BPA for another project, and no cultural resources were found at that time. BPA initiated Section 106 consultation with the Washington SHPO and the Cowlitz and Confederated Tribes of the Grande Ronde on December 27, 2022 with a determination of no historic properties affected. The WA SHPO concurred with BPA's determination on December 27, 2022. No comments were received from the tribes by the end of the comment period and Section 106 was complete on January 27, 2023. No impacts to historic and cultural resources are expected.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary, localized soil disturbance would occur from trenching. The trenched area would be backfilled and restored to the original state after construction. Vehicles and equipment could cause soil compaction and disturbance, but they would be used exclusively on previously disturbed roads. Any excess spoils generated during project activities would be hauled off site to an approved location. Standard construction best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented, including dust, erosion, and sediment controls, and spill prevention plans. The site is flat and soils and sediments would not travel off-site or into any sensitive areas. Only minor impacts to soils from trenching are expected.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would occur within the existing disturbed ROW, which is actively cultivated for hay. No rare plants are present within the project area. No impacts to plants are expected.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All proposed work would occur within the existing disturbed ROW consisting of cultivated hay fields. No special-status wildlife species or habitats are present. Some common wildlife species may be affected by construction of the trench through grassland habitat removal and disturbance; however, no significant impacts to any species are anticipated. Overall impacts to wildlife would be low.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is located in an upland area outside of floodplains and away from streams and other water bodies. No impacts to water bodies, floodplain or fish would occur.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is located in a dry upland area with no wetlands present. No impacts to wetlands would occur.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground disturbance from trenching is unlikely to reach depths to groundwater. Standard construction BMPs would reduce the potential for inadvertent spills of hazardous materials that may contaminate groundwater or aquifers. If a spill does occur, it would be cleaned immediately and disposed of at the appropriate facility off-site. 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 nearby residential and agricultural land uses due to construction noise, access restrictions, increased construction traffic, and ground disturbance. All work would be within the existing BPA fee-owned property transmission line ROW and along existing access roads. The proposed action would be consistent with current surrounding land uses and no permanent changes in land use would occur on BPA-fee owned property or along the existing transmission line ROW. The proposed action may temporarily impact land use (hay operations) during or immediately following construction but would have no impact on land use or specially-designated areas in the long term.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During construction, the presence of construction equipment and general construction activities would cause temporary visual impacts. Once the project is completed the site would be returned to pre-construction conditions with continued agricultural use and would not be noticeable. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would cause a minor and temporary increase in fugitive dust and emissions in the local area from general construction activities. Standard construction BMPs would suppress dust. There would be no long-term change in air quality after construction of the proposed action is completed.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During construction, the use of vehicles and equipment, and the performance of general construction activities would temporarily and intermittently produce noise at levels higher than current ambient conditions. Construction-related noise would be audible from properties located near the transmission line, including residential and agricultural, properties. 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: All standard safety protocols would be followed throughout project construction, and standard construction BMPs would minimize risk to human health and safety. The proposed action would have no impact on 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 proposed action would occur on existing BPA fee-owned ROW and substation property. Nearby landowners would be notified of construction activities if they have the potential to disrupt traffic or local access.

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

Signed: /s/ Doug Corkran July 19, 2023
Doug Corkran, ECT-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist