

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Prosser Tap Switches Upgrade and Bypass

Project No.: P04381

Project Manager: Dianne Bonner – TEPL-TPP-1

Location: Benton County, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.6- Additions and modifications to transmission facilities, B4.13 Upgrading and rebuilding existing powerlines.

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to rebuild and reconfigure a disconnect switch system along the Grandview-Red Mountain No. 1 Transmission Line at Prosser Tap. The Prosser Tap Switches are located on the north side of West Snipes Road and east of North Hinzerling Road approximately six miles north of the city of Prosser, WA. The existing switches are over 70 years old and have reached their end of service life. BPA proposes to remove the existing switch at structure 1/2 and construct a new switch on a permanent bypass, which would be located along the north side of the Grandview-Red Mountain No. 1 Transmission Line within BPA's right-of-way. The legs of the old switch stand and platform would be cut off just below the surface and the footings would be left in place. A temporary shoofly consisting of six wood poles with guys on five of them would be installed to keep the city of Prosser energized during construction. These poles would be installed in new holes and be in place for approximately six weeks.

Existing roads would be used to access the sites; no access road work is proposed. Overall, about 0.75 acres of land would be disturbed during project installation.

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
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 area is located next to a two lane rural highway with shallow ditches on either side with weedy species in the medians and ditches. The switch structure on the south side of the highway is adjacent to a fruit orchard and has weedy species under and immediately surrounding it. The two switch structures on the north side of the highway are on Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) property in previously-cultivated fields with low grassy vegetation and weedy species present. The project area is gently sloping to the west and south. No water bodies, floodplains, or wetlands exist in or near the project area.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The Washington SHPO and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation were included in Section 106 consultation. BPA archeologists reviewed the site in the summer of 2022 and made a determination of no adverse effect on historic properties on October 24, 2022. The Washington DAHP concurred with BPA's determination on October 24, 2022 and no other consulting parties responded within 30 days. Section 106 consultation concluded on November 23, 2022.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area sits in on gently sloping ground with sparse vegetation. The light loess soils are subject to erosion due to ground disturbance, but since the site does not have steep slopes the likelihood of sediment transport from erosion is low. Due to the small footprint of the project, only minor impacts to geology and soils are expected.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The vegetation in the project area is primarily weedy species, although DNR appears to have planted native bunchgrass in the areas north of the project area. The project area is small and adjacent to a paved highway where the medians are regularly mowed, so weed transport into and out of the project area is expected to be minimal. No special-status plants are located in or near the project area. No new access roads or landings would be constructed and the footprint of the new switch structures are small impacts to plants are expected to be low.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is minimal wildlife habitat in and around the project area and there are no documented occurrences of special-status wildlife species nearby. Common wildlife species likely use the project area and may be temporarily displaced by construction, however these impacts are expected to be temporary and minimal. Only minor impacts to common wildlife species are expected.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No water bodies or floodplains exist in or near the project area. No impacts to water bodies, floodplains or fish would occur.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is located in a dry upland area. No wetlands are present in or near the project area. No impacts to wetlands would occur.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No areas of shallow groundwater are known to exist within or around the project area and construction activities are not expected to create pathways or materials that could affect groundwater or aquifers. No impacts to groundwater and aquifers are expected.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A portion of the project area is located on Washington DNR land, however all work would take place within existing right-of-way. BPA's Realty department has worked with DNR to ensure that no new land rights are needed. No changes to land use would occur and there are no recreational uses of the DNR land that would be affected. Only minor impacts to land use or specially-designated areas are expected.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No areas sensitive to changes in views (e.g., residences, etc.) are located near the project area. Some minor visual changes to the existing switch structures would be apparent to nearby viewers, but the new structures would appear similar to the existing ones. Only minor impacts to visual quality are expected.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Updating the switch structures would not cause any long-term changes in air quality. Some short-term fugitive dust and vehicle emissions would occur during construction. Only minor impacts to air quality are expected.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No changes to current noise levels would occur with the long-term operation of the switches. Some temporary increases in noise levels due to construction equipment would occur during construction. Only minor noise impacts are expected.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Replacement of the switches would not create conditions that would affect human health and safety. No hazardous materials beyond oil and gas products would be used during construction. No impacts to human health and safety are expected.

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: Underlying and adjacent landowners have been notified about the project and would be contacted prior to construction starting.

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 January 19, 2023
Doug Corkran Date
Environmental Protection Specialist