

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Mason and Jefferson PUDs Fiber Projects

PP&A No.: 4694

Project Manager: James Hall, TPC-TPP-4

Location: Thurston, Mason, Jefferson, and Clallam Counties, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.7 Fiber optic cable

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to work in conjunction with Mason County Public Utility District (PUD) 3 and Jefferson County PUD (separately) to upgrade fiber optic cable and connections at several locations within the BPA's Olympia district. Locations are associated with the following Substations: Olympia, Shelton, Potlatch, Quilcene, Duckabush, Fairmount, Happy Valley, and Port Angeles. All project locations are on BPA-fee owned property or properties owned by the corresponding PUD.

Work at each location may include installation of new fiber optic cables in existing conduit, splice existing fiber optic cables in or on existing structures, and allow customers to lease excess conduit space or operational fiber on existing BPA fiber optic cables at BPA-owned facilities. BPA would allow customers to gain access to leased fiber cables by splicing into cables or installing new fiber cables in existing conduit located on existing structures or in existing vaults, including Bonneville Vaults (BVs) and/or Customer Vaults (CVs).

Project activities at Olympia, Shelton, Quilcene, Duckabush, Fairmount, Happy Valley, and Port Angeles would not require ground disturbing activities. All work would occur within or on existing buildings, vaults, conduits, or transmission structures. At Potlatch, excavation of a small trench and installation of conduit would be required to make the necessary fiber optic cable connections. The trench would be approximately 200 feet in length, 3 inches deep and 12 inches wide. No other excavations are part of this project.

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/ Greg Tippetts
Greg Tippetts, EPR-Olympia
Physical Scientist - Environmental

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange
Katey Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: July 26, 2021

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: Mason and Jefferson PUDs Fiber Projects

Project Site Descriptions

Locations are associated with the following Substations; Olympia, Shelton, Potlatch, Quilcene, Duckabush, Fairmount, Happy Valley, and Port Angeles. All project locations are on BPA-fee owned property or properties owned by the corresponding PUD.

Work at Olympia substation would be located East of the substation within the transmission line right-of-way. The right-of-way is maintained as a community of low-growing grasses and forbes. All work would be within existing concrete vaults and underground conduits.

Work at Shelton substation would be located inside the fenced graveled substation within existing buildings, concrete vaults and underground conduits.

Work at Potlatch would be located outside the fenced substation directly adjacent to the facility on the West side. The trench and conduit installation would be in previously-disturbed soil consisting of gravel and native vegetation. The new conduit would connect existing fiber optic cable on a BPA transmission structure to an existing PUD underground concrete vault.

Work at Quilcene substation would be located outside the PUD's fenced substation directly adjacent to the facility on the South side. The area consists of an open field of grasses located next to a paved county road. All work would be within existing buildings, concrete vaults, and underground conduits.

Work at Duckabush substation would be located outside the PUD's fenced substation directly adjacent to the facility on the South side. The area is located within the BPA transmission line right-of-way. The right-of-way is maintained as a community of low growing grasses and forbes. All work would be within existing buildings, concrete vaults, and underground conduits.

Work at Fairmount substation would be located outside the fenced substation yard directly north of the paved access road for the facility. The area is located within the BPA transmission line right-of-way. The right-of-way is maintained as a community of low growing grasses and forbes. All work would be within existing buildings, concrete vaults, and underground conduits.

Work at Happy Valley substation would be located inside the fenced graveled substation within existing buildings, concrete vaults and underground conduits.

Work at Port Angeles substation would be located inside the fenced graveled substation within existing buildings, concrete vaults and underground conduits.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On March 18, 2021, BPA engaged in consultation with the Skokomish Tribal Nation, the Squaxin Tribe, and the WA Dept. of Archaeology & Historic Preservation (DAHP), for the project locations. The project area was surveyed by a BPA archaeologist. On May 25, 2021 determination letters which stated no historic properties would be affected by project

activities were distributed to the Skokomish Tribal Nation, the Squaxin Tribe, and the WA Dept. of Archaeology & Historic Preservation. The DAHP concurred with the final determination on May 25, 2021. No additional responses were received.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: At Potlatch, the project includes one small trench approximately 200 feet in length, 3 inches deep and 12 inches wide. The excavation would be in previously-disturbed and/or fill material brought in during the construction of the substation. No other sites require excavation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some common native and non-native plants at the Potlatch excavation location may be temporarily impacted. Disturbance would be surficial and these plants would be expected to recover naturally through propagation and via the existing seed bank in the area.

No special-status plants or Endangered Species Act (ESA)-listed plants would be impacted from project activities. Under Section 7 of the ESA, BPA obtained an official species list from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on July 16th, 2021. No ESA-listed plant species are present in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA obtained an official species lists for the project counties, in Washington State, (Thurston, Mason, Jefferson, and Clallam) from the USFWS on July 16th, 2021. Due to the lack suitable habitat and presence in the project area, BPA has determined that the project would have “no effect” on ESA listed species or their critical habitat. No other special-status wildlife would be impacted by project activities. Work areas are isolated to at or near existing substations. These locations are within areas frequented by people, equipment, and minor disturbances. No disturbances outside the normal of day-to-day activities would occur.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No in-water work or ground disturbance near waterways is proposed.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No work in or near wetlands is proposed.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No excavation or work that would potentially impact groundwater and aquifers is proposed.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Work areas are isolated to at or near existing substations. No specially-designated areas are within the work locations.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would not alter existing visual quality. All fiber installations would be in current or new (Potlatch) vaults, buried conduit, or on existing transmission structures.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The excavation at Potlatch would not be outside of normal day-to-day construction activities using normal light equipment. All other activities are by hand at existing vaults, buried conduit, or on existing transmission structures.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The Work areas would be isolated to at or near existing substations. These locations are within areas frequented by people, equipment, and minor disturbances. No disturbances outside the normal of day-to-day activities would occur. The excavation at Potlatch would not be outside of normal day-to-day construction activities using normal light equipment. All other activities would be conducted by hand at existing vaults, buried conduit, or on existing transmission structures.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is considered normal construction and maintenance.

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: This project was initiated at the request of Mason PUD 3 and Jefferson PUD. BPA's Transmission organization has been coordinating the project with the PUDs. Proposed work at Olympia, Potlatch, Fairmount, Happy Valley, and Port Angeles substations would be on BPA-fee owned property. Work at Shelton, Quilcene, and Duckabush substations would be on PUD owned property and involve BPA owned assets.

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

Signed: /s/ Greg Tippetts
Greg Tippetts, EPR-Olympia
Physical Scientist, Environmental

Date: July 26, 2021