

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: AT&T Snohomish East LTE Antenna Upgrade

Project No.: W0825

Project Manager: Chuck Wedick, TELP-TPP-3

Location: Snohomish County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.19 Microwave, Meteorological, and Radio Towers, B4.6 Additions and Modifications to Transmission Facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow AT&T to upgrade existing long-term evolution (LTE) antenna equipment on existing transmission equipment owned by BPA and leased to AT&T. The AT&T communications facility is located on structure 129/6 on the Chief Joseph-Snohomish No. 3 and 4 transmission line, approximately 7 miles southeast of Everett, Washington. The existing antennas would be replaced due to technological advancements.

Specifically, a BPA-certified contractor would remove nine existing cellular antennas, nine existing tower-mounted amplifiers (TMAs), and associated coaxial cables, and replace them with six new antennas, six new TMAs, and new slightly larger diameter coaxial cables. In addition, new radios, triplexers, and diplexers would be installed within AT&T's fenced area located under the transmission structure on a BPA easement. AT&T would access the communications equipment by using a bucket truck and climbing the structure. The project would not involve ground-disturbing activities and would use established access roads and work areas.

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/ Becky Hill

Becky Hill
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Carol Leiter

Carol Leiter
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel February 18, 2022

Sarah T. Biegel 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.

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Project Site Description

The project area is located at structure 129/6 on BPA's Chief Joseph-Snohomish No. 3 and 4 transmission line, approximately 7 miles southeast of Everett, Washington. The project area is located in the west slope foothills of the Cascade Mountain Range, and is surrounded by a mixture of open fields and pastures, rural residences, golf courses, and mixed hardwood-conifer forests. The Snohomish River Valley is located about 5 miles west of and 2 miles south of the project area. Intermittent streams and wetlands are abundant in the area surrounding the project site. There are 8 National Wetland Inventory documented wetlands within 0.25 of the project area, but the closest wetland is over 600 feet away. Four unnamed intermittent streams are located within 0.25 mile of the project area, but the closest stream, which is also migratory habitat for coho salmon, is located over 850 feet away from the project area. Many streams in the local area provide migratory, rearing and spawning habitat for coho salmon, and flow into the Pilchuck River, which is designated freshwater critical habitat for this species. The Pilchuck River and its associated floodplain are located about 0.75 mile west of the project area.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing work is proposed and no staging areas are necessary. A BPA archaeologist determined that this project would not have the potential to cause effects to historic properties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing work is proposed. Therefore, the project would not impact geology and soils in the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

- Explanation: There are no documented occurrences of any state-listed, special-status, or federally-listed plant species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) within 3 miles of the project area; therefore, the proposed project would not have an effect on state-listed, special-status, or federally-listed ESA plant species.

The proposed activities would occur on an existing transmission structure and within an existing AT&T equipment area underneath the structure. Existing gravel and two-track dirt

roadways in a pasture would be used to access the structure; however, pasture grasses may be temporarily crushed by the bucket truck while maneuvering around the structure.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no documented occurrences of any state-listed, special-status, or federally-listed wildlife species under the ESA in the project area; therefore, the proposed project would not have an effect on state-listed, special-status, or federally-listed ESA plant species. No suitable wildlife habitat would be altered as a result of the project. The project site is located near a residence, and pasture with outbuildings, so ambient noise levels in the local area are moderate. The project activities would create minor noise impacts, but these would not be substantially greater than the existing ambient noise in the area.

Notes:

If any birds are found to be nesting on the transmission structure, construction of the project would be delayed until the birds have left the nest.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities would not require ground-disturbing activities that could produce sediment that could enter waterways.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities would not require ground-disturbing activities that could produce sediment that could enter a wetland. The proposed work is not occurring in any wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing work is proposed. Therefore, the project would not impact groundwater and aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change to the land use at this location and the project area is not located in a specially-designated area.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The replacement antennas and equipment would generally be a like-for-like replacement of the existing antennas and equipment. Therefore, the proposed project would not substantially alter the visual quality of the area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project activities would generate a small amount of vehicle emissions and dust during construction. However, there would be no substantial changes to air quality after construction is complete.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours. However, there would be no substantial changes to noise quality of the area, beyond temporary construction-related noise impacts.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All standard safety protocols would be followed during project activities; therefore, 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: AT&T would notify the nearby underlying landowners as required by BPA prior to commencing work.

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

Signed: <u>/s/ Becky Hill</u>	<u>February 18, 2022</u>
Becky Hill, ECT-4	Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist	
Flux Resources, LLC	