

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Sprint Ainsworth Site Wireless Upgrade

Project Manager: Jonathan Toobian—TELP-TPP-3

Location: Skamania 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: BPA proposes to allow Sprint Corporation to upgrade their communication equipment at the Ainsworth wireless site on BPA's Knight-Ostrander #1 500-kV transmission line (tower 61/3) in Skamania County, Washington (Section 39, Township 2 North, Range 7 East). The work would include removing and replacing two antennas attached to tower 61/3. Remote Radio Heads (RRHs) would be added to the antenna mounts and new coaxial cable would be installed, connecting the RRHs to existing equipment located on the ground, beneath the tower base. To ensure safety, BPA contract certified linemen would complete the wireless antenna and coaxial cable installation work. The project would not involve any ground excavation.

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, July 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/ Nancy A. Wittpenn

Nancy A. Wittpenn
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: March 15, 2018

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.

Proposed Action: Sprint Ainsworth Site Wireless Upgrade

Project Site Description

The equipment replacement would occur on an existing transmission structure located within an existing transmission line right-of-way. This structure is located in the N. Bonneville urban area about 300 feet from the Columbia River and adjacent to existing roads. The site is flat, and covered with grasses, weeds, and gravel. Paved roads surround the tower and a short gravel spur comes off the road to the fence underneath the tower. This area has been heavily disturbed through the years by construction of Bonneville Dam, transmission lines, highways and roads, and the city of N. Bonneville.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

| Environmental Resource Impacts | No Potential for Significance | No Potential for Significance, with Conditions |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. Historic and Cultural Resources | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> BPA has reviewed the proposed activities and determined that this type of activity does not have the potential to cause effects to historic properties, per 36 CFR 800.3 (a). | | |
| 2. Geology and Soils | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> The proposed project does not involve ground disturbance. Existing paved and a short gravel spur road to the base of the tower would be used for access. | | |
| 3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> The base and area surrounding the tower contains grasses, weeds, and gravel. The project would have no impacts to any special-status plants. | | |
| 4. Wildlife (including federal/state special-status species and habitats) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> No special-status species or habitats are present at any of the locations. The project would have no impacts to special-status wildlife. A field visit confirmed there are no nests on the tower or within the surrounding area close to the river. | | |
| 5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including federal/state special-status species and ESUs) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> The tower is about 300 feet from the Columbia River which does contain special-status fish species. No ground disturbance would occur and there would be no impacts to water bodies, floodplains, or listed fish species. | | |

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: No wetlands are present. The USGS Soil Survey does not show hydric soils. The project does not involve any ground-disturbing activities. Additionally, any vehicles would stay on the surrounding roads and the spur road at the base of the tower.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: The project does not involve any ground disturbance; therefore, there would be no impact to groundwater and aquifers.

8. **Land Use and Specially Designated Areas**

Explanation: There would be no change to land use at the project location. There are no specially designated areas at this location.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: The wireless antennas and equipment are consistent with the existing use of the utility corridor and replace existing equipment.

10. **Air Quality**

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

11. **Noise**

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

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: There would be no impact to 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, if necessary:

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: Sprint coordinates all tower work with BPA Engineering.

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

Signed: /s/ Nancy A. Wittpenn
Nancy A. Wittpenn —ECT-4
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: March 15, 2018