

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Propane Tank and Access Road Improvements for the Easton Communications Site

**Project No.:** P00834

**Project Managers:** Ben Younce, TEP-CSB-1 and Carla Clay, TEP-CSB-2

**Location:** Kittitas 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:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to replace liquid propane gas (LPG) tanks, equipment and supply lines, improve and expand the vehicle parking/turnaround area adjacent to the Easton communications site, and improve the unpaved BPA access road used to access the site with water bars, cross drain culverts, drainage dips and gravel.

## **LPG Equipment Improvements**

The existing LPG tanks have faulty fuel level gauges, which prevent the fuel supply company from safely filling the tanks. To remedy this situation, BPA proposes to perform the following improvements:

- Temporarily remove up to 150 linear feet of chain link fence and posts surrounding the Easton communications site to gain access to the existing LPG tanks
- Pump any remaining LPG from the tanks into temporary holding tanks
- Remove two 1,250 gallon tanks by crane or via skids
- Excavate the existing tank footings from below the ground's surface, and install new cast-in-place concrete pads for the new propane tank
- Install a new 2,000 gallon LPG tank on the new concrete pads
- Replace the LPG supply line between the new tank and the engine generator located inside the building, while capping and removing the old supply lines
- Install new grounding conductor from the new tank to existing tower ground ring

## **Vehicle Parking/Turnaround Area Improvements**

The existing gravel vehicle parking/turnaround area is surrounded by large rock outcrops and is too small for large LPG supply trucks to safely turnaround. To remedy this situation, BPA proposes to perform the following improvements:

- Break-up and remove 3 to 4 large rock outcrops and boulders surrounding the existing parking area with a pneumatic drill and expanding grout method
- Grade and compact the newly expanded parking area (0.15 acre)
- Apply approximately 30 tons of 1½ inch minus gravel to a depth of 3 inches

## **Access Road Improvements**

The existing 1.1 mile-long BPA access road is in poor condition due to lack of maintenance and scouring from snowmelt. The LPG supply company cannot safely access the communications site because of the

road's current condition. To remedy this situation, BPA proposes to perform the following improvements:

- Install two new water bars and two new drainage dips
- Install three new 24-inch diameter cross drain culverts and remove three young Douglas-fir trees that may be in the way of the culverts' rip rap outfall
- Grade, compact, and apply new surface gravel to the access road as needed

**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/ Becky Hill

Becky Hill  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Flux Resources, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Gene Lynard

Gene Lynard  
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: March 28, 2018

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:** Propane Tank and Access Road Improvements for the Easton Communications Site

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## Project Site Description

The project area is located in Kittitas County, Washington, and consists of the BPA Easton communications site, the vehicle parking/turnaround area adjacent to the communications site, and the 1.1 mile-long unpaved BPA access road that leads to the communications site. All three of these components are located within the 500 foot-wide BPA rights-of-way (ROW) that are managed for low-growing vegetation. In addition, 3.6 acres of the project area are located on lands administered by the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, Cle Elum Ranger District (USFS); and the remaining 1.3 acres of the project area are on BPA fee-owned property where the Easton communications site is located.

The Easton communications site and vehicle parking/turnaround area are situated on top of a ridgeline and are surrounded by large rock outcrops and steep topography. The 1.1 mile-long unpaved access road is located under the transmission lines within the ROW, and steadily climbs in elevation as one travels from east to west to the Easton communications site.

## Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. <b>Historic and Cultural Resources</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The BPA archaeologist initiated Section 106 consultation on December 19, 2016, with the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), USFS, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation.</p> <p>An Archaeological Resources Protection Act permit was received from the USFS on October 4, 2017.</p> <p>On January 10, 2018, the BPA archaeologist determined that implementation of the proposed undertaking would result in: no adverse effect on the Easton communication site; no effect on KT03508 (archaeological site) and no effect on the Olympia-Grand Coulee No.1, Schultz-Echo Lake No.1, Schultz-Raver No.1, Schultz-Raver No.3, and Schultz-Raver No.4 Transmission Lines.</p> <p>Washington DAHP concurred with the no adverse effect determination on January 10, 2018. No responses were received from the USFS, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, or the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation.</p> <p>Should any cultural resources be discovered during project activities, then all project work must stop, and the cultural resources lead should be notified immediately. An Inadvertent Discovery procedural document with contact information would be supplied to the construction contractor.</p>		
2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Explanation: Ground-disturbance activities are proposed where the BPA access road and vehicle parking/turnaround area would be improved. Best management practices (BMPs) for temporary erosion and sediment control would be implemented. The local area would be contoured to be consistent with surrounding topographic conditions and reseeded with a local seed mix recommended on March 2, 2018, by the USFS.

3. **Plants** (including federal/state special-status species)

Explanation: Plant species that may be disturbed by project activities include: Douglas-fir, kinnikinnick, young Scotch broom, bracken ferns, and short-statured herbaceous species and bunch grasses.

There are no documented occurrences of any plants listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in the project area; therefore, the proposed project would not have an effect on ESA-listed plant species.

Per USFS recommendations received on March 2, 2018, a specific native, locally-sourced, plant seed mix would be used to revegetate areas where bare soil would remain after project activities are complete.

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

Explanation: The BPA contract Environmental Protection Specialist coordinated with the United States Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service Washington Fish and Wildlife Office, Central Washington Field Office (USFWS) during the summer of 2017. BPA submitted a Biological Assessment (BA) on February 26, 2018, with a 'may affect, but not likely to adversely affect' [NLAA] determination for the following ESA-listed species and designated critical habitat: the northern spotted owl, the northern spotted owl's designated critical habitat, the Canada lynx, and the gray wolf. The BA also included a NLAA determination for the North American wolverine, which is currently a candidate species under USFWS's jurisdiction. The BA included the following conservation measures to mitigate potential impacts, and would be given to the contractor in a Mitigation Implementation Table upon contract award:

- Timing restrictions – no construction work would be performed between March 1 and July 31 of each calendar year
- Timing and noise restriction – pneumatic rock drilling and other loud activities (greater than 89 dBA) would not occur between March 1 and July 31 of each year and would not occur for more than three consecutive days
- Noise reduction – no blasting activities would be performed at any time during this project

USFWS concurrence was received on March 22, 2018, for BPA's NLAA determination for the northern spotted owl and its designated critical habitat, the Canada lynx, and the gray wolf. The USFWS also issued a 'not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of the species' for the North American wolverine. No other Threatened or Endangered species occur near the project area.

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

Explanation: There are no water bodies, floodplains, or fish habitat in the project area.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: There are no wetlands in the project area.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: The relatively shallow depth of ground disturbance activities [up to 4 feet deep] are not expected to impact groundwater or aquifer resources potentially located in the region.

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

Explanation: There would be no permanent changes to land use at this location.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: The project activities and noticeable visual changes to the project area would be temporary or visually consistent with the existing structures and equipment located at the communications facility.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: There would be temporary dust and vehicle emissions during construction activities. BMPs would be implemented.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: There would be temporary, intermittent noise from construction activities during daylight hours. BMPs would be implemented.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: There would be no impacts to human health and safety from the project activities.

### 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:

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**Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Description: BPA coordinated with USFS, USFWS, and the liquid propane gas provider, AmeriGas.

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

Signed: /s/ Becky Hill  
Becky Hill, ECT-4  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Flux Resources, LLC

Date: March 28, 2018