

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Morrow Flat and McNary Substation Additions—Umatilla Electrical Cooperative Interconnection

**Project No.:** L0389

**Project Manager:** Charla Burke

**Location:** Morrow and Umatilla Counties, Oregon

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B4.11 Electric power substations and interconnection facilities

**Description of the Proposed Action:** BPA proposes to add equipment in several existing substations in Morrow and Umatilla Counties, OR to allow Umatilla Electrical Cooperative (UEC) a new point of interconnection. The interconnection would allow UEC to serve additional electric loads in the area.

The BPA work would include equipment additions at BPA's Morrow Flat and McNary Substations, as well as at two UEC planned substations and the existing UEC Hermiston Generation Plant Substation.

At the **Morrow Flat** Substation in Boardman, OR, BPA would construct two 230/115kV electric bays within the substation yard. The work would include the addition of a 230/115kV 300MVA power transformer, three 230kV circuit breakers, eight 115kV circuit breakers, associated disconnects, current transformers, and a 115kV capacitor bank. There would be footing removal and installation of new foundations and footings for buswork support construction. In the control house, relay protection electronic equipment and associated racks would be added. No yard expansion would be needed but upgrades would be made to the drainage and oil containment systems, and to lightning protection

UEC would connect two new 115kV transmission lines to the electrical bays by installing two adjacent single steel monopole transmission towers on BPA property outside the substation, within 165 feet of the fence. Expected disturbance would occur in an area recently disturbed by the construction of the substation and the installation of the existing UEC transmission line and similar dual tower structures. An overhead ground wire would accompany the new 115kV lines, as would a new aerial fiber cable that would be routed to an existing customer fiber vault outside the fence. Existing access roads would be utilized to reach the new tower construction points. There would be some additional temporary vegetation and ground disturbance by equipment movement.

Equipment laydown and other staging may be situated on the graveled area outside the substation between the substation and Lewis and Clark Drive, a County road that was used for staging during the construction of the Morrow Flat Substation. A temporary security fence would likely be installed along the existing perimeter, and there would be minimal new ground disturbance along the edge of gravel to accommodate fence installation activities.

A telephone line would also be installed at Morrow Flat Substation to support Dial Automatic Telephone System (DATS) for daily operation and maintenance activities at the substation. A direct boring of two-

to four-inch PVC conduit would go through the previously-disturbed staging area north of the substation to the telephone service lines at Lewis and Clark Drive. The local telephone company would provide a lightning arrester and a high voltage isolation jack panel at a new riser. From about ten feet outside the substation fence, the line would be routed through the existing telephone trench system to the control house.

The work at **McNary** Substation in Umatilla, OR, would include the addition of fiber optic cable and work within the McNary relay and control houses—no ground disturbance would be required. UEC would bring fiber into an existing customer vault for communications equipment from their existing above-ground electric transmission line. BPA would use an existing BPA vault on the substation grounds to connect the communication fiber. Work within the McNary relay and control houses would include metering and relay modifications to the associated 230kV terminal and associated wiring and control system programming.

In addition, BPA would install and maintain equipment to meter and control transmission at the two planned UEC substations, and would replace a metering rack at the existing UEC Hermiston Generation Plant Substation.

**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/ Michael J. O'Connell  
Michael J. O'Connell  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason  
Stacy L. Mason  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: May 25, 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:** Morrow Flat and McNary Substation Additions—Umatilla Electrical Cooperative Interconnection

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### Project Site Description

The Morrow Flat substation is located in the semi-arid Columbia Plateau ecoregion, and is situated among irrigated crop circles. Natural vegetation of the area is a mix of scrub and herbaceous forbs and grasses. Also in the Columbia Plateau ecoregion, the McNary substation is surrounded by mixed development, agriculture, and recreational land. McNary is about 1,500 feet from the Columbia River.

### 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Explanation: A BPA archeologist determined that the project would have no effect on historic properties per Section 36 CFR 800.4(d)(1). On December 15, 2017 the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office concurred with BPA’s determination of the project’s effects.

2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Explanation: There would be disturbance to natural soils with the two tower installs, and related temporary access road improvements at Morrow Flat Substation. The potential area of surficial ground disturbance would total less than 3 acres, with only about 300 square feet of permanent disturbance/soil displacement predominantly from the towers’ footprints. Best Management Practices (BMPs) including seeding of the area with a BPA-approved seed mix would limit loss of topsoil by wind and water transport. Also, the excavated material would be used as backfill to the extent it is suitable; otherwise, it would be discarded at an approved facility. Because the area to be developed is small and has been previously disturbed, the impacts would be minor.

3. <b>Plants</b> (including federal/state special-status species)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Explanation: There are noxious weed concerns with any disturbance of vegetated areas, or inadvertent seeding of mineral soils in the general vicinity. Previous surveys for related projects found species such as diffuse knapweed nearby, and kochia within the area of planned work. Care would need to be taken to manage the potential for spreading invasive species.

Mitigations:

- ✓ Thoroughly clean vehicles before entering the project area.
- ✓ Re-seed disturbed areas as soon as feasible with a BPA-approved seed mix.

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

Explanation: There is a potential for occurrence of the Oregon State-endangered Washington ground squirrel (WGS) and Western burrowing owl (WBO), a National Bird of Conservation Concern, at Morrow Flat Substation. For instance, There is an observation from 1980 of a WGS two miles to the south that has unknown accuracy, and there are colonies in the general vicinity at Boardman Bombing Range, three miles to the south. However, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife were consulted and the biologist conveyed that there would be low probability of habitation by WGS or WBO north of US Interstate Highway 84 in Oregon. A survey was conducted by contract biologists at the Morrow Flat project site on April 5, 2018 to search for signs of WGS and WBO presence. There were no signs of these species found, and it is concluded there is no presence of the species of interest due to lack of habitat and a preponderance of recently disturbed lands.

Ground-nesting breeding birds covered by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act could be present in the vicinity but are not expected to be breeding in the poor quality, recently disturbed, and heavily-graded substation perimeter lands.

Coyote Springs Wildlife Management Area is within one mile of planned work, making it too distant to be affected by the project.

Mitigations:

- ✓ Contractor shall alert BPA staff if native bird nesting activity is witnessed in the project area.

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

Explanation: Located in the interior Columbia Recovery Domain for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)-administered salmonids, Morrow Flat Substation is in the Middle Columbia River Distinct Population Segment's hydrologic boundary for ESA-threatened steelhead, and is nearly two miles from bull trout USFWS-designated critical habitat at the Columbia River. The small disturbance area and the use of soil conservation, erosion reduction, and spill prevention and remediation BMPs would limit any perturbation to well outside areas of influence on fish habitat. McNary work would not disturb the ground.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: There are isolated small pockets of surveyed wetland areas in the general vicinity of the Morrow Flat substation. The area where the work is planned is modified by the substation construction and is occupied by drainage structures and transmission line access roads. No work would traverse wetlands nor occur directly adjacent to wetlands.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: BMP execution will limit hazardous material spills, and workers would employ all necessary remediation techniques in the unlikely event of a breach of groundwater or aquifer.

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

Explanation: At over one mile from Morrow Flat, the Coyote Springs Wildlife Refuge and its operations would not be impacted by the project.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: There would be no effects on visual quality because the main above-ground features of the project at Morrow Flat would be consistent with current conditions, and stay within the substation or on its perimeter. No change in visual conditions would occur at McNary.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: There would be typical amounts of dust and vehicle emissions during construction activities at Morrow Flat. Such impacts would be minimal due to the nature of the surrounding industrial and large-scale agricultural setting.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: There would be temporary, intermittent noise from construction activities during daylight hours that would not be inconsistent with the surrounding area.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: All work would be limited to developed substation properties with little chance for exposure of any hazards to general public. Work site hazards would be discussed at daily safety meetings, and workers would be subject to all applicable state and federal safety regulations for electrical systems construction.

### 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 owns the land where work would take place at Morrow Flat and all access would be from public or BPA-owned roads. The work at McNary would be on tracts leased or owned by BPA and may only require notice to the US Army Corps of Engineers, the underlying landowner on portions of McNary.

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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/ Michael J. O'Connell  
Michael J. O'Connell, ECT-4

Date: May 25, 2018