

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Mobile Redi-Sickler Radio Station Upgrades

Project Manager: Ben Younce—TEPF-CSB-2

Location: Douglas 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 upgrade its Very High Frequency (VHF) radio system at the existing Sickler Radio Station, located at BPA's Sickler Substation. The project would help replace BPA's aging VHF radio system with a simple, modern radio system with improved voice coverage for remote field personnel.

BPA would install new equipment, including an equipment rack and a VHF repeater, within the existing control house. A new 20-foot-long by 3-inch-diameter VHF whip antenna and coaxial cable would be installed on the tower. The existing icebridge would be used to connect the coaxial cable from the tower to the control house via the existing entry port into the building. A grounding wire would be added and connected to the existing grounding mat. Up to five potholes, for connecting the ground bar wire to the ground mat, would be excavated to a depth of 18 inches adjacent to the control house foundation.

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/ Beth Belanger

Beth Belanger

Contract Environmental Protection Specialist

Flux Resources, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Carol Leiter

Carol Leiter
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange August 28, 2020

Katey C. Grange Date
NEPA Compliance Officer

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.

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Project Site Description

The project location is at BPA's Sickler Substation in Douglas County, Washington. The project area is graveled and inside the fenced substation yard.

Sickler Radio Station is in Section 35, Township 24 North, Range 20 East and is located 0.40 miles east of the Columbia River, 0.67 miles northeast of the Rocky Reach Dam and approximately six miles north of Wenatchee, WA. The topography at the radio station is a flat river valley with steep slopes rising to the east and west. The surrounding area consists of camping, agricultural fields, and undeveloped shrub-steppe habitat.

There are no waterways or wetlands in, or near, any of the sites.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Sickler Substation and associated facilities are eligible for listing on the National Historic Register, but the proposed project activities have been determined to have no potential to effect the integrity of this resource. Additionally, all of the ground disturbing activities would occur within the fenced areas around the substation, which have been substantially disturbed and thus the action would not affect archaeological resources. BPA has determined that these undertakings have No Potential to Effect Historic Properties.

Notes:

- If any touch-up paint is needed on the tower it would be painted to match the existing blue color.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The ground disturbance at the site would be minimal and would cause no impacts to geology or soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project areas are devoid of vegetation; therefore, there would be no impacts to vegetation, including special-status plants.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project site is within a fenced area and does not contain high quality habitat. Temporary elevated noise would occur from project activities which may disturb adjacent wildlife; however the noise levels would be comparable to other operation and maintenance activities already occurring at the substation, which local wildlife is likely habituated to. There are no known endangered or special-status species that would be affected by the construction activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no water bodies, floodplains, or fish at, or near, the project location; therefore, there would be no impacts to these resources.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands at, or near, the project location; therefore, there would be no impacts to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed ground disturbance at the project site would be a maximum depth of 18 inches and would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The land use would not change at the location. There are no specially-designated areas near the project site.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The visual quality would be consistent with the existing use of the radio tower; therefore, there would be no substantial change to the visual quality at the project locations.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

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

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

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

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During project activities all standard safety protocols would be followed. 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.

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

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.

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.

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: BPA owns the facility and would not need to coordinate with underlying landowners for this project. The VHF upgrade project is similar to other maintenance activities that occur at this facility, and would not warrant notification to adjacent landowners.

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

Signed: /s/ Beth Belanger

August 28, 2020

Beth Belanger, ECT-4
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC

date