

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Condon Wind Substation, Wasco Radio Station, and De Moss Substation Communication Facilities Upgrade

Project Manager: Charley Majors - TEPF-CSB-2

PP&A No.: 4577

Location: Sherman and Gilliam counties, OR

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.9 Microwave, meteorological, and radio towers

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to upgrade communication facilities at Condon Wind Substation (owned by SeaWest Windpower, Inc.), Wasco Radio Station, and De Moss Substation. Replacement of outdated radio equipment throughout BPA's communications system would ensure communication and power system reliability and maintain compliance with Western Electric Coordinating Council requirements.

Condon Wind Substation: The substation yard would be expanded to the west (about 63 feet by 124 feet in area) to provide space for a 40-foot-tall steel lattice communication tower and communication building within the substation yard (substation fencing would be extended to include this area). A fiber optic cable vault (4-foot by 4-foot by 4 foot) would be installed adjacent to the tower base. About 65 feet of fiber cable conduit would be installed in a trench (about 42-inch deep by 24-inch wide) between the existing and new communication buildings.

Existing UHF radio communications equipment would be replaced with higher bandwidth digital equipment and housed in the new building.

Ground disturbance would occur in the expansion area including cut or fill slopes along the boundary (about 0.5 acre). During construction, equipment and materials would be stored in a staging area (about 80 feet by 80 feet) south of the expansion area on the west side of the substation road.

Wasco Radio Station: Two microwave dish antennas measuring 6 and 10 feet in diameter would be replaced by two new 6-foot-diameter microwave dish antennas on the existing radio tower. Two other antennas would be removed without replacement. No ground disturbance would occur.

De Moss Substation: The existing control house would be expanded to the north about 12 feet. A waveguide bridge would be installed between the existing microwave tower and the control house expansion portion. An existing waveguide bridge between the microwave tower and the older portion of control house would be removed. Two HVAC units mounted on the exterior north wall would be replaced with new HVAC units. Existing station service batteries would be relocated from within the existing control house to the new expansion area.

Ground disturbance for the control house expansion would occur within the fenced substation yard (about 600 square feet).

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/ Emma Reinemann
Emma Reinemann
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange
Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: December 18, 2020

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

Condon Wind Substation is located in a rural area with lines of wind turbines to the east and west. Topography is hilly with drainages (elevation at the substation is about 3,240 feet). Vegetation is sparse in the area around the substation which appears disturbed from substation construction. The closest drainages with NWI wetlands are located about 0.1 miles north and 0.2 miles east of the substation. A local Grange Hall and one residence appear to be located about 0.3 miles and 0.4 miles north, respectively.

De Moss Substation is located in a rural area within a topographic draw adjacent to an NWI wetland and seasonal waterway (non-fish bearing). Southeast of the substation, the wetland and waterway flow through a riparian area with a FEMA floodplain. Land use is open space or dry land agriculture.

Wasco Radio Station is located on a topographic high point (about 2,400 feet in elevation) amid open space and dry land agricultural fields. Three other radio stations are located on the same high point. The area is sparsely vegetated with shrubs. The Lower Deschutes Wildlife Management Area's eastern boundary is about 0.5 miles west.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA initiated Area of Potential Effect (APE) consultation with the Oregon Heritage State Historic Preservation Office, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon. The project area was surveyed by a BPA archaeologist. No cultural resources were identified during the survey. BPA determined that the project would have no adverse effect to historic properties and distributed the determination report to the interested parties on November 9, 2020. The Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon concurred with BPA's determination and requested that an Inadvertent Discovery Plan be put in place for construction. No other responses were received.

Notes:

- An Inadvertent Discovery Plan would be implemented during construction.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Excavated spoils would be placed in a BPA-approved location at Condon Wind and De Moss substations. All disturbed soil would be stabilized.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed or other special-status species or habitat present at the three sites. Disturbed areas would be reseeded.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed or other special-status species or habitat present at the three sites. Work at De Moss Substation and Wasco Radio Station would be limited to existing developed areas where no habitat is present. The expansion at Condon Wind Substation would have a minimal impact on habitat as the expansion area is small in relation to the surrounding landscape which has minimal development.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No waterbodies, floodplains or fish present at Condon Wind Substation or Wasco Radio Station. All work at De Moss Substation would be within the yard so no impacts on the seasonal stream or floodplain would occur.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands present at Condon Wind Substation or Wasco Radio Station. All work at De Moss Substation would be within the yard so no impact on the wetland would occur.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is unlikely to impact groundwater or aquifers. At Condon Wind Substation, footing depth for the tower would be about 3 feet. Footings for the De Moss Substation Control House expansion would be less than 3 feet. Spill prevention measures would be utilized during construction activities at all sites.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change to land use in the project areas and there are no specially-designated areas near Condon Wind Substation or DeMoss Substation. Replacing antennas on an existing tower would not impact management or use of the Lower Deschutes Wildlife Management Area near Wasco Radio Station.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Expansion of Condon Wind Substation and installation of the radio tower would add additional man-made elements to the landscape. Likely the tower would be more visible

from the Grange Hall and residence although at 40 feet, the entire tower may not be visible. Due to the hilly terrain and distance (about 4 miles), the new tower would likely not be visible to residents of Condon, Oregon. Travelers along the Wasco-Heppner Highway might see the tower but with the existing substation and wind turbines, views would not be different than existing.

Expansion of the De Moss Substation Control House would not change the look of the building; roof and siding materials would match existing. Replacement of antennas at Wasco Radio Station would also likely not be noticeable.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

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

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Noise does travel further in rural settings so some may be heard at the residence to the north of Condon Wind Substation. However, noise generated (at all three sites) would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours.

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.

Explanation: NA

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

Explanation: NA

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: NA

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: NA

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: No landowner notification or coordination would be necessary at Wasco Radio Station and De Moss Substation because BPA owns these sites. BPA would notify SeaWest Windpower prior to work at their substation.

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

/s/ Emma Reinemann

DATE: December 18, 2020

Emma Reinemann, EPR
Environmental Protection Specialist