

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Franklin PUD Soil Resistivity Testing at Franklin Substation

**Project No.:** LURR20200067

**Project Manager:** Mike J. Deklyen – TERR-3

**Location:** Franklin County, Washington

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B3.1 Site characterization and environmental monitoring

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow Franklin Public Utility District (Franklin PUD) to conduct soil resistivity testing on BPA fee-owned property at the Franklin Substation near Pasco, Franklin County, Washington. The testing is in preparation for a future rebuild of Franklin PUD's Franklin Distribution Substation. The project would take one to two days to complete and would consist of driving four metal rods (approximately 0.25-inch diameter) into the ground at various spacing to depths of approximately 6 to 10 inches. A temporary electrical current generated using a 12-volt battery would then be applied to measure the soil's resistivity. No heavy equipment would be required. Field staff would access testing areas on foot, and vehicles would remain on existing access roads and parking areas. The project would not require any soil excavation, vegetation removal, or materials or equipment staging.

**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/ W. Walker Stinnette  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Salient CRGT

Reviewed by:

/s/ Carol P. Leiter  
Carol P. Leiter  
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: February 25, 2020

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:** Franklin PUD Soil Resistivity Testing at Franklin Substation

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## Project Site Description

The project site is located on BPA fee-owned property at BPA's Franklin Substation near Pasco, Franklin County, Washington (Section 27, Township 9 North, Range 30 East). Work would occur outside of the substation fence to the north and east. The project site is located on a relatively flat plain within the broader inter-mountain basins semi-desert shrub-steppe ecosystem. Ground cover within the project site consists of grassland interspersed with scrub and shrub species. The surrounding area is a mix of agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial development. There are no mapped wetlands or waterbodies within 0.5 mile of the project 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Explanation: Although the BPA-owned Franklin Substation was constructed in 1948, it has been evaluated and is recommended that it does not meet all of the standards necessary to be eligible for inclusion on to the National Register. Because soil resistivity testing would result in minimal to no ground disturbance, the proposed action would not adversely impact the integrity of archaeological resources or the Franklin Substation. Therefore, BPA has determined that this undertaking has No Potential to Effect historic properties.

2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Explanation: Soil resistivity testing would result in minimal to no soil disturbance from inserting the metal rods into the ground. No soil excavation or grading is proposed, and all vehicles would remain on existing access roads and parking areas.

3. <b>Plants</b> (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Explanation: No tree or vegetation removal is proposed. There are no document occurrences of any state special-status plant species or plant species protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) near the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would result in no impact to protected plant species.

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



Explanation: Minor and temporary disruption of normal wildlife behavior could occur from elevated noise and human presence during soil resistivity testing. However, current ambient noise and disturbances are high in the area due to operations and maintenance activities at the substation and due to activities associated with surrounding land uses. As such, many wildlife species that could be present in the area would likely already be habituated to human activity. Electrical currents generated during soil resistivity testing would pose little to no risk of harming any ground-dwelling wildlife that could be present in or near the project site. There are no nearby documented occurrences of any state special-status wildlife species or wildlife species protected under the Federal ESA, and no such species or suitable habitat are expected to occur at the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would result in no impact to protected wildlife species.

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



Explanation: The project site is not in or near any waterbodies or floodplains, and there are no documented occurrences of any state special-status or ESA-listed fish or fish habitat near the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would result in no impact to these resources.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: No wetlands are present within or near the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would result in no impact to wetlands.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: There would be no impact to groundwater and aquifers at the project site.

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



Explanation: There would be no change in land use at the project site. No specially-designated areas are in the project vicinity.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: There would be no impact to visual quality at the project site.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Project-related activities would result in minimal to no dust and vehicle emissions in the local area. There would be no long-term changes in air quality following completion of the project.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Project-related noise from vehicles and increased human presence would be minor and temporary and would occur during daylight hours. There would be no long-term changes in noise levels following completion of the project.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: The project would not generate or use hazardous materials and would not create conditions that would increase risk to human health and safety. No impacts to human health and safety are expected as a result of 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: The project site is on BPA fee-owned property. Adjacent landowners and right-of-way easement lessees would be notified of the upcoming project by BPA.

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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/ W. Walker Stinnette  
W. Walker Stinnette – EC-4  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Salient CRGT

Date: February 25, 2020