

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** T-Mobile Mt Zion L600 Antenna Upgrade at Biddle Butte Radio Station

**Project Manager:** Jonathan Toobian, TELP-TPP-3

**Location:** Skamania, 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) is proposing to allow T-Mobile to upgrade L600 antennas on the existing T-Mobile system that is located in the Biddle Butte Radio Station. T-Mobile's equipment is located approximately 45-feet above ground on the existing 75-foot-tall lattice tower. The new antennas would allow T-Mobile to upgrade its wireless communication facility to the latest technologies. The upgrade would consist of removing six existing antennas, six existing tower mounted amplifiers, and associated antenna mounts, and replacing those with three new 72-inch-tall by 25-inch-wide antennas, three new 22-inch-tall by 12-inch-wide radio remote units (RRU), three new 28-inch-tall by 13-inch-wide RRUs, and three new antenna mounts on the lattice tower structure. In addition, the existing coaxial cable, which runs through the center of the tower, would be removed and replaced with a hybrid cable. The new hybrid cable would connect the new antennas to T-Mobile's existing outdoor equipment compound, located southwest of the tower. Additionally, the replacement and/or addition of corresponding telecommunications equipment, such as routers, cabinets, and basebands, would occur within T-Mobile's equipment compound on BPA fee-owned property. The work would be completed by a T-Mobile contract crew with a BPA-certified safety watcher onsite.

The project would not involve ground disturbance and would use established access roads and work areas.

**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/ Ronald "RJ" Theofield

Ronald "RJ" Theofield  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Portland State University

Reviewed by:

/s/ Carol Leiter

Carol Leiter  
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

<u>/s/ Katey C. Grange</u>	<u>September 16, 2020</u>
Katey C. Grange	Date
NEPA Compliance Officer	

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:** T-Mobile Mt Zion L600 Antenna Upgrade at Biddle Butte Radio Station

## **Project Site Description**

The project area is located at the top of Biddle Butte in Skamania County, Washington, approximately one mile from the Columbia River and within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area. The site is in Township 1 North, Range 5 East, Section 9. The project would be within the fenced area of BPA's existing Biddle Butte Radio Station, which is on BPA fee-owned property. The site has numerous communication facilities and its surface is covered by gravel. A Douglas-fir dominated forested area of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest immediately surrounds the site and a mix of agricultural and low density residential land uses are nearby.

## **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Because the Biddle Butte Microwave Radio Station is not eligible for the National Register (i.e., considered historic) and no ground disturbance would occur, a determination of no potential to affect was made by the BPA Archaeologist on August 20, 2020.

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities would not require ground disturbing activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work in existing radio station yard; no special-status species present/disturbed. Existing roadways and right-of-ways would be used.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work in existing radio station yard; no habitat present.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities would not require in-water work or ground disturbance that would produce sediment that could enter nearby waterways.

## 6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities would not require ground disturbance that would produce sediment that could enter nearby wetlands.

## 7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance proposed.

## 8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change to land use at this location. The Biddle Butte Radio Station site is located within the the boundaries of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA). The US Forest Service was notified of the proposed project on August 25, 2020 and responded on August 27, 2020.

Note:

- Notiy US Forest Service when BPA expects to conduct this work.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The new antennas would be a like-for-like replacement of the exisiting antennas; therefore, they would be visually consistent with existing development and not noticeable from nearby viewsheds or CRGNSA Key Viewing Areas.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The activities would generate a small amount of vehicle emissions and dust during construction.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours. The operational noise of the antennas would not change.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Workers would follow all standard safety protocols. 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: N/A

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

Explanation: N/A

**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: N/A

**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: N/A

### **Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Description: No notification – all work on BPA fee-owned property and no visual or other effects 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/ Ronald "RJ" Theofield September 16, 2020  
Ronald "RJ" Theofield, ECT-4 date  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Portland State University