

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Stream Gauge Installation and Operation on Ross-Lexington No. 1

Project No.: LURR-20200089

Project Manager: Charlene R. Belt, TERR-ROSS-MHQA

Location: Clark County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow Clark County Public Works (Clark County) to install and operate a stream gauge on BPA fee-owned right-of-way (ROW) south of structure 6/5 on the Ross-Lexington No. 1 transmission line in Vancouver, Clark County, Washington (Township 3 N, Range 1 E, Section 13). The stream gauge would monitor an unnamed tributary of Mill Creek in order to determine how stream flow changes over time as surrounding land is developed.

The stream gauge would consist of a monitoring equipment box (approximately 2 feet by 3 feet) mounted on a single post (approximately 6 inches by 6 inches) located on the stream bank above the ordinary high water mark. The post would be installed up to two feet deep and would either be driven directly in the ground or would be installed in an excavated post hole. Excavated soils would be used for backfill or would be scattered on-site. Additional components would be installed in the stream, including a reference staff gauge and a conduit extending from below the water line to the equipment box. The conduit and the staff gauge would be attached to a single piece of angle iron (2-inch arms) driven into the streambed. Periodic site visits would be required to maintain and repair equipment and to ensure that the stream gauge is functioning properly. The stream gauge could be operated for up to 10 years. Following completion of the study, the stream gauge would be removed, and the site would be returned to preexisting conditions.

Installation and removal of the stream gauge and ongoing operation and maintenance could require crushing or removing a small amount of herbaceous vegetation. The site would be accessed on foot from an existing paved access road. No other site preparation, including tree or shrub removal, would be required.

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

W. Walker Stinnette

Contract Environmental Protection Specialist

Salient CRGT

Reviewed by:

/s/ Carol P. Leiter

Carol P. Leiter

Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange April 13, 2021

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.

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Project Site Description

The project site is located on BPA fee-owned right-of-way (ROW) south of structure 6/5 on the Ross-Lexington No. 1 transmission line in Vancouver, Clark County, Washington (Township 3 N, Range 1 E, Section 13). The stream gauge would be installed on the north bank of an unnamed tributary of Mill Creek. The project site is maintained free of tall trees and is characterized by a mix of low-growing native and non-native herbaceous and shrub species, including Pacific waterleaf (*Hydrophyllum tenuipes*), stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*), piggyback plant (*Tolmiea menziesii*), trailing blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*), Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*), licorice fern (*Polypodium glycyrrhiza*), western sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*), willow (*Salix sp.*), bittercress (*Cardamine sp.*), and bedstraw (*Galium sp.*). Outside of the ROW, the surrounding area is a mix of residential properties, pasture, and fragmented forested land. There are no wetlands mapped within the project site, and no wetlands were observed during a site visit in April 2021. The Gee soil series is mapped within the project site, which is not hydric.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No archaeological resources would be impacted as ground disturbance would be minimal (i.e., installing a single 6-inch by 6-inch post up to two feet deep) and would occur in a previously-disturbed area. No modifications to existing built historic resources are proposed. Therefore, the proposed undertaking would have no potential to cause effects to historic properties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground disturbance would be minimal and limited to a single 6-inch by 6-inch area. Following removal of the stream gauge, the hole would be backfilled and returned to original grade.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Installation and removal of the hydrology station and ongoing operation and maintenance could require crushing or removing a small amount of herbaceous vegetation. No tree or shrub removal would be required. There are no documented occurrences of any protected plant species near the project site. No such protected plant species or suitable

habitat were observed during a site visit in April 2021. Therefore, the proposed project would have no effect on protected plant species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary disturbance of normal wildlife behavior could occur from elevated noise and human presence during installation, removal, and ongoing operation and maintenance. However, no protected wildlife species are expected to occur in the project area, and the project would not result in adverse modification to suitable protected species habitat. Therefore, the proposed project would have no effect on protected wildlife species or habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Stream gauge installation and removal, including the in-stream components, could be conducted largely from the stream bank without entering the water. These activities would result in minor disturbance of streambed sediment, which would temporarily increase turbidity. Following completion of the proposed activities, suspended sediments would resettle on the streambed, and turbidity would quickly return to pre-existing conditions. Operation of the stream gauge would not impact the tributary, and the stream gauge would not be located within a FEMA-designated floodplain. Therefore, the proposed project would have no long-term impact on water bodies and would not impact floodplains.

The tributary of Mill Creek is habitat for coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*) and steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), both of which are listed as Threatened under the Federal Endangered Species Act. The tributary is also designated critical habitat for coho salmon. However, both species occur in this portion of the tributary during migration only, and do not use the tributary as spawning or rearing habitat. In addition, in-stream components would be installed close to the bank in a shallow area where protected fish species can be seen and avoided. The project would not result in adverse modification to fish habitat. Therefore, the proposed project would have no effect on protected fish species or habitats.

Notes:

- Clark County would conduct a careful visual survey of the stream before conducting any in-stream work to determine if any protected fish are present.
- In-stream work would not occur in turbid water where visibility is poor (i.e., unable to see the bed of the stream).

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The stream gauge would not be located within a wetland. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Installation of the stream gauge could reach depths that would intersect groundwater or aquifers, if present. However, the project would not generate or use hazardous materials

that could lead to contamination, and no new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers are proposed. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact groundwater and aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not require a permanent change in land use and would not impact adjacent land uses or any specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The stream gauge is small and unobtrusive and would not be visible from adjacent properties. The project site is not located in a visually sensitive area. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary and minor dust and vehicle emissions would increase in the local area during installation and removal of the stream gauge and during periodic site visits. Following completion of the proposed project, there would be no long term change in air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary and minor noise from human presence and vehicle and equipment use would occur during installation and removal of the stream gauge and during periodic site visits. These activities would occur during daylight hours, and each site visit would be completed within a few hours. Routine operation of the stream gauge would not result in an increase in ambient noise. It is unlikely that project-related noise would be audible from the closest noise sensitive receptors.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Individuals carrying out proposed project activities would be trained in proper techniques and equipment use. The project would not generate or use hazardous materials. Therefore, the proposed project would not be expected to impact human health and 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: The project site is located on BPA fee-owned property. No landowner notification, involvement, or coordination would be required.

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 April 13, 2021
W. Walker Stinnette, EC-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient CRGT