

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: T-Mobile Carson Refarm Antenna Upgrade

Project Manager: Chuck Wedick

Location: Skamania 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 allow T-Mobile to upgrade their equipment on the North Bonneville-Midway No. 1 line at structure 10/2. Work would consist of removing three existing remote radio units (RRUs) and installing three new RRUs on the structure. One new voltage booster and four new rectifiers would be installed in an existing cabinet. One radio module would be relocated into an existing cabinet. An H-frame, which would require digging two post holes for the legs, approximately 12 to 18-inches-deep and about 8 to 10-inches-wide, would be installed within the existing equipment yard fence to support one new cabinet. All equipment removals and replacements would occur on an existing transmission line structure and within an existing ground equipment yard located under the structure. Equipment used would likely include a bucket truck, crane, pickup trucks, and hand tools as necessary.

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/ Kali Levy

Kali Levy

Contract Environmental Protection Specialist

Portland State University

Reviewed by:

/s/ Carol Leiter

Carol Leiter

Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange August 18, 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 within a designated urban area of Carson, Washington in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (Township 3 North, Range 8 East, and Section 28). The project site is in a BPA fee owned transmission corridor and consists of maintained grasses and runs through rural neighborhoods. Access is provided to the tower from an existing, unimproved roadway. The nearest waterbody is Carson Creek, approximately 0.25 mile west. There are no wetlands in the vicinity of the site. There is designated critical habitat for spotted owls (*S. occidentalis*) approximately one mile northeast.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA cultural staff have reviewed the project and found no potential to effect historic or cultural resources. As the proposed activities are taking place below the structure where there is a fenced area containing existing communications equipment (buried cables, above ground cabinets, buried vaults, etc.), the location of the proposed ground disturbance would take place within previously imported engineered fill material and it is highly unlikely that archaeological resources would be identified during project activities.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground disturbance would only occur from the installation of the H-frame within the existing fence of the previously disturbed and graveled equipment yard underneath the structure.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no known special-status plants within the project area. Minimal vegetation would be effected as access is provided from an unimproved roadway and actions occur within the graveled equipment yard.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No special-status species are present at the project site. The nearest critical habitat for spotted owls is approximately a mile away and the proposed project actions would only have the potential to affect owls at 0.25 mile or less from spotted owl critical habitat; there would be no effect on special-status species. Construction activities may temporarily displace non-listed wildlife but there would be no long-term impacts to wildlife.

Notes:

- If any active nests are found on the structures prior to construction, the construction would be delayed until the nests are unoccupied.

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 present at or within 0.25 mile from the project site. Ground disturbance would be limited to installing the H-frame in the existing graveled equipment yard; there would be no effect on water bodies or fish.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands at or near the project site. Ground disturbance would be limited to installing the H-frame in the existing graveled equipment yard; there would be no effect on wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground disturbance would be limited to installing the H-frame in the existing graveled equipment yard; there would be no effect on groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The site houses existing communications equipment. The project site is within a designated urban area of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area; project actions would be consistent with that land use designation. There would be no change in land use.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The site houses existing communications equipment and proposed changes would be similar in style. There would be no effect to visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Air quality effects would be limited to small amounts of dust and vehicle emissions that would occur during project activities.

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: Crews would follow all applicable health and safety protocols.

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 on BPA fee owned land. No coordination needed.

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

Signed: /s/ Kali Levy August 18, 2021
Kali Levy, ECT - 4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Portland State University