

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: T-Mobile Prairie Caba Anchor Antenna Upgrade Project

Project Manager: Chuck Wedick – TELP-TPP-3

Project Number: W0927

Location: Skagit County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.19 Microwave, Meteorological, and Radio Towers; B4.9 Additions and Modifications to Transmission Facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow T-Mobile to upgrade existing cellular antenna equipment and install new equipment on existing transmission equipment owned by BPA and leased to T-Mobile. The T-Mobile communications facility is located on structure 33/5 of the Murray-Custer No. 1 transmission line, located about 7 miles north of Sedro Woolley, Washington.

Specifically, a BPA-certified contractor would install two new antennas (about 39 inches by 22 inches by 6 inches in size) near the top of the steel transmission line structure, install up to 200-linear feet of cable routed along one of the structure's legs, and install a new junction box near the T-Mobile cabinets near ground level. The contractor would also install conduit in a trench up to 36 inches deep, up to 24 inches wide and up to 8 feet long, which would connect the new junction box to the existing cabinets within the fenced T-Mobile communications area. T-Mobile would access the communications equipment by using a bucket truck and climbing the structure. The project 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.

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 structure 33/5 of BPA's Murray-Custer No. 1 transmission line, about 7 miles north of Sedro Woolley, Washington. The site is in Township 36 North, Range 5 East, Section 18. The site is fenced for livestock pasture grazing and the topography at the site is relatively flat with a slight incline to the east; it is located on a bench about 200 feet in elevation higher than the Samish River, with steep slopes on both sides of the Samish River Valley. Highway 9 runs north-south and is 0.65 miles west of the project location. The surrounding area is primarily comprised of rural residential properties with open canopy pastures or mixed conifer hardwood forest habitat.

The site is located in the Samish River watershed. Two streams are located approximately 350-feet northeast and 550-feet southwest of the project location. There is no hydrological connectivity from the project site to these streams. A review of the National Wetland Inventory, topography, and aerial photos did not reveal any wetlands or waterbodies at the site. The vegetation at the project site consists of mostly reed canary grass, Western buttercup, and bracken fern.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The BPA historian and archaeologist reviewed the proposed action and determined that the undertaking is a type of activity that does not have the potential to cause effects on historic properties, assuming such historic properties were present. The historian and archaeologist issued a memo documenting this determination on May 27, 2022.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Trenching activities associated with conduit installation would result in approximately 16 square feet of ground disturbance in an area covered by native and non-native grasses and low growing vegetation species. All ground disturbance would occur within previously disturbed areas from the installation of the steel-lattice structure and T-Mobile communications facility under the structure. Excavated material would be stored temporarily onsite and then used for backfill. Best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented to prevent the migration of sediment off-site.

Notes:

- Revegetate disturbed areas with a native seed mix appropriate for the region, as soon as practicable after project completion.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No special-status plant species or suitable habitat for special-status plant species are present at the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would have no effect on special-status plant species. About 16 square feet of low-quality, regularly grazed pasture and grassland habitat would be temporarily disturbed by trenching activities.

Notes:

- Revegetate disturbed areas with a native seed mix appropriate for the region, as soon as practicable after project completion.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: There are no known occurrences of special-status wildlife species or habitats at the project site. However, the Oregon spotted frog (*Rana pretiosa*) has been documented in the western portion of the Samish River Valley, which is bisected by railroad tracks. The eastern edge of the valley is located about 1,300 feet to the west of the project site and is about 200 feet lower in elevation than the site. Critical habitat for the Oregon spotted frog has been designated by US Fish and Wildlife Service in the western portion of the Samish River Valley (opposite side of the railroad tracks). At its closest point, the critical habitat is about 2,000 feet away from the project site. The project would have no effect on Oregon spotted frog or designated critical habitat.

Construction activities may temporarily displace non-listed wildlife species but there would be no long-term impacts to wildlife.

Notes:

- To ensure that project activities have no effect to the Oregon spotted frog, the following timing restrictions and BMPs would be employed:
 - Work would occur during the dry season (from July 1 to September 30).
 - Work would not occur during or immediately after a major precipitation event (>0.5 inch).
 - Workers and equipment would not enter areas of standing water; including driving over roadways that have been flooded.
 - Vehicles and equipment would be restricted to staying on the access road and tower landing; where there is no clearly established access road or tower landing, it would be required to limit the movement of vehicles and equipment and stay as close to the tower as safely possible.
 - Vehicles and equipment must be cleaned prior to entering the project site to reduce the potential to spread or to introduce noxious weeds.
 - Vegetation within the equipment compound would be mechanically removed. Herbicide treatments in the equipment compounds are contractually prohibited.
 - If in-water work must occur, disinfection procedures would be utilized for control of chytrid fungus (*Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*), ranavirus, and other potentially unknown disease or parasites.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area does not contain any water bodies, floodplains, or surface connectivity to fish-bearing streams. Therefore, the project would not impact water bodies, floodplains, or fish.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area does not contain any wetlands. Therefore, the project would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Trenching activities would not provide a pathway for groundwater contamination. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not alter existing land use and there are no specially designated areas present at the project site.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The wireless antennas and equipment are consistent with the existing use of the utility corridor and radio tower facilities. There would be no substantial change to visual quality after the proposed action is complete.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There may be a small amount of vehicle emissions during project activities; however, there would be no substantial changes to air quality after the proposed action is complete.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action could temporarily produce noise levels at greater than current ambient conditions. Noise impacts would be temporary and intermittent and would only occur during daylight hours (approximately 7AM to 7PM) for 1 to 2 days. There would be no long-term change in ambient noise following completion of the proposed action.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All standard safety protocols would be followed during project activities. Therefore, the proposed action would not be expected to 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: T-Mobile would be responsible for contacting and coordinating with the landowner prior to beginning project activities onsite.

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

Signed: /s/ Becky Hill June 30, 2022
Becky Hill, ECT-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist