

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Round Valley Monopole Installation

Project Manager: Vincent Majors – TEPF-CSB-2

Location: Custer County, Idaho

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 install a 60-foot-tall monopole radio tower at its Round Valley Substation, in central Idaho. The existing fence would be expanded on the western side of the substation yard, to accommodate the new monopole. The fence expansion would be 13-feet-wide by 52-feet-long. The foundation for the monopole would be 4-feet-deep. An 11.5 foot by 11.5 foot square concrete pad would also be installed at the base of the new monopole location. After the monopole is attached to the foundation, a 6-foot-diameter microwave dish would be installed, along with an ice-bridge and a waveguide, which would connect to an existing port in the adjacent control house building. Fall protection equipment would also be installed on the new monopole. Additionally, a 125 VDC outlet would be installed on the exterior of the control house.

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/ Beth Belanger

Beth Belanger
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

<u>/s/ Sarah T. Biegel</u>	<u>October 20, 2022</u>
Sarah T. Biegel	Date
NEPA Compliance Officer	

Attachment: 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 location is at the existing BPA Round Valley Substation, in central Idaho, six miles southeast of the City of Challis. The underlying property is owned by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The site is in Section 19, Township 13 North, Range 20 East. The project location was previously developed as a substation yard with an adjacent gravel parking area.

The surrounding area is a semi-arid, scrub-shrub habitat, dominated by sagebrush and bunch grasses.

An unnamed irrigation canal is located 0.20 miles to the east and an unnamed lake is located 0.34 miles southeast of the project location. Highway 93 is 0.30 miles west of the Round Valley Substation.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA cultural staff have reviewed the proposed project activities and have determined that the project would have no potential to cause effects to historic or cultural resources. On September 1, 2022, BPA provided a letter determination of no effect to historic properties within the area of potential effects to the following consulting parties: Shoshone-Bannock Tribes – Fort Hall Indian Reservation, Nez Perce Tribe, and Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). On September 22, 2022, the Idaho SHPO concurred with BPA's determination. To date, no other responses have been received.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minimal soil disturbance would occur. Excavation for the monopole foundation would be to a depth of 4 feet. Excavated soils would be used to backfill around the new concrete pad at the base of the monopole.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project location is devoid of plants. No Federal or state special-status species or habitats would be impacted by the project.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project location is at an existing substation and does not have good quality habitat. Construction noise would be similar to ambient noise levels from the substation equipment and Highway 93, and therefore would not likely create an additional disturbance to wildlife in the surrounding area. No Federal or state special-status species or habitats would be impacted by the project.

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 within the project areas; therefore, there would be no effects to these resources.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands present within the project area; therefore, there would be no effects to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project location is 16 miles northwest of the Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer. Ground excavation for the project would be minimal and would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not involve any land use changes. All work would occur at an existing BPA substation.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The new monopole would not be taller than the existing substation equipment and would therefore, not impact the visual quality of the area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions would occur during construction; however, there would be no substantial changes to air quality during or after construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise would not change substantially.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During project activities, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Project activities would not impact human health or safety. The installation of fall protection on the new monopole would improve overall safety for tower maintenance workers.

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: BPA coordinated with BLM staff to determine that the project falls within BPA's existing easement. BLM stated that the work would be classified as maintenance and that BLM does not have any NEPA or realty requirements for the project. There are no residences or businesses adjacent to the project area.

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

Signed: /s/ Beth Belanger October 20, 2022
Beth Belanger Date
Environmental Protection Specialist