

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Red Mountain Substation Breaker Addition

**Project No.:** P03102

**Project Manager:** Mike Henjum – TEPS-TPP-1

**Location:** Benton County, Washington

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B4.6 Additions and Modifications to Transmission Facilities

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to remove and add equipment at the Red Mountain Substation to interconnect new Benton Public Utility District (PUD) load. Equipment to be removed within the fenced yard includes risers and horn gaps, bus, and bus supports and foundations. A new circuit breaker, voltage transformers, surge arrestors, disconnect switches, and two substation panels would be added. Electronic equipment (relays, metering, and control schemes) would be added in the existing control house.

Outside the existing fenceline and on substation property, a temporary shoo-fly would be installed causing BPA's Red Mountain-Richland Structure 1/2 to be replaced (in the same location) due to increased electrical loading from the shoo-fly placement. The shoo-fly would provide a continuous connection between BPA and Benton PUD's transmission systems during the work window which is estimated to be 6–8 weeks.

The shoo-fly would include three separate structures (two single wood poles and one wood pole H-frame). The two single poles would each be located next to BPA's Red Mountain-Richland Structure 1/2 and Benton PUD's Sunset Rd. transmission line structure (structure number unknown), respectively. The H-frame structure would be located mid-way between the two poles.

BPA's Red Mountain-Richland Structure 1/2 and the shoo-fly single wood poles would be direct-embed. Plate anchors would be used for new guy wires on Structure 1/2 and the existing counterpoise would be reused if in acceptable condition. All three shoo-fly structures would be removed after substation work is complete and the substation energized. No new access roads would be needed.

**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/ Nancy A. Wittpenn

Nancy A. Wittpenn  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

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Katey C. Grange  
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:** Red Mountain Substation Breaker Addition

## **Project Site Description**

The project is located at Red Mountain Substation in Benton County, Washington (T10N, R27E, Section 35). The substation is surrounded by homes, storage, and outbuildings in a rural residential setting; and light industrial use property and open space. The landscape is relatively level, soils are loose and sandy, and vegetation is typical of shrub-scrub habitat commonly found in the more rural parts of the Tri-Cities area. There are no waterbodies or wetlands near the substation.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Section 106 consultation was initiated on March 15, 2021 with the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation (YN). DAHP and the YN concurred with the APE on March 15<sup>th</sup> and March 16<sup>th</sup>, respectively. BPA notified DAHP and the YN on January 21, 2022 that the APE had changed. DAHP and the YN concurred with the adjusted APE on January 21<sup>st</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, respectively. A cultural resource survey of the APE and adjusted APE was conducted in 2021 and 2022. Based on a review of the survey results and final report, a BPA historian and archaeologist determined that no historic properties would be affected. DAHP concurred with BPA's determination of effect on November 17, 2022. No additional comments were received from other consulting parties and the 30-day consultation period ended on December 17, 2022.

Notes:

- Treat potential discoveries of archaeological materials with the inadvertent discovery guidelines: stop work, contact the BPA EP lead and/or the BPA archaeologist for further required notifications, and ensure integrity of site and materials until further instructions are given.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Outside the substation, sandy soils and riverine rock below the soil layer would be disturbed by new structure placement and removal. All excavated material would be backfilled and any excess material would be used to help bury any needed counterpoise and/or spread thinly around the new structures on BPA property.

Notes:

- Soils would be stabilized during and after construction to prevent erosion and sedimentation, per the Eastern Washington Stormwater Manual. A SWPP Plan would be

required. Post-construction, a native seed mix that also supports pollinators would be drill-seeded in all disturbed areas. A layer of hydromulch would then be applied.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Shrub-scrub habitat on substation property would be temporarily disturbed during the installation and removal of the wood pole structures. No known Federal or state special-status species were observed or known to be present in or near the project site.

Notes:

- Post-construction, a native seed mix that also supports pollinators would be drill-seeded in all disturbed areas. A layer of hydromulch would then be applied.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Wildlife that forage in or around the substation may temporarily scatter from construction noise and activity, but the level of noise and activity would be temporary. No known Federal or state special-status species were observed or are known to be present in or near the project site.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No natural water bodies or floodplains occur in or near the project site.

### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands occur in or near the project site.

### **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The new structure (which would be direct-embed) and new footings in the substation are not large enough to create a barrier to any groundwater flow that may be in the area. No known aquifers exist in or near the project site. All shoo-fly structures are temporary and would be removed after construction and energization are complete.

### **8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The new equipment and structure would not alter the existing use of the substation and are an approved use at the project site. There are no specially-designated areas at this location.

### **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The new equipment and structure at the substation would not be out of character with existing equipment and structures.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary dust would be generated by vehicles and construction at the project site.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary noise would occur during daylight hours for the duration of construction and could be a nuisance to rural and suburban residences in and around the project site.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All equipment to be removed would be appropriately disposed of as required by BPA standards and other regulations. A Pollution Abatement Clearance would be requested for work within the substation.

### **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: See Human Health and Safety above.

**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: See Human Health and Safety above.

**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: Surrounding landowners would be notified before construction and provided with a general construction schedule and contact information in case of questions or concerns.

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

Signed: /s/ Nancy A. Wittpenn January 3, 2023  
Nancy A. Wittpenn, ECT-4 Date  
Environmental Protection Specialist