

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Covington Substation Tie Line Improvement Project

PP&A No.: 4926

Project Manager: Jay Chester

Location: King County, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance.

Description of the Proposed Action: The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) plans to remove existing transmission structures, replace select transmission structures in the same locations, and construct new structures in new locations as part of the Covington Substation Tie Line immediately adjacent and within the Covington Substation in King County, Washington.

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/ Chad Browning

Chad Browning

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel Date: July 19, 2023

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: Covington Substation Tie Line Improvement Project

Project Site Description

BPA proposes to remove existing transmission structures, replace select transmission structures in the same locations, and construct new structures in new locations as part of the Covington Substation Tie Line immediately adjacent and within the Covington Substation in King County, Washington. Project would include minor tree clearing, access road spur, and landing construction to facilitate new structure install.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, Puyallup Tribe of Indians, Snoqualmie Indian Tribe, and Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), on May 5, 2023. The Snoqualmie Indian Tribe responded with a request for an archaeological field investigation and for notification prior to the fieldwork. BPA notified the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe of the fieldwork and completed a field investigation in June 2023. No new historic properties were identified, however, the project would occur at the National Register of Historic Places-listed Covington Substation and BPA considered project effects to this historic property.

On June 14, 2023, BPA submitted a report summarizing the results of BPA's investigation and determination that there would be **no adverse effect** to historic properties to the consulting parties. DAHP concurred in a letter dated June 15, 2023. The Snoqualmie Indian Tribe responded via email on June 23, 2023, stating they had no additional comments to offer. No additional responses were received within 30 days.

Notes:

- Implement inadvertent discovery protocols in the unlikely event that cultural material is encountered during the implementation of this project. BPA would require that work be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA and in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Localized soil disturbance would occur during steel lattice structure replacements, installations, road spur construction, and landing improvements. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized as necessary.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal or State special-status plant species are recorded in the project area. Project would include the removal of approximately 55 trees to allow for new tie line structures. Area would be reseeded with low-growing native vegetation after project completion.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area does not include habitat for any Federal or State special-status species. There would be no effect to ESA-listed species in the area. Project activities would encompass mostly existing substation and right-of-way with the exception of the removal of approximately 55 trees on the edge of a forest stand to provide clearance for new transmission structure.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions.

Explanation: No in-water work is proposed for this project. Standard construction erosion control measures would be utilized to ensure sediment and other contaminants do not enter bodies of water; therefore, water bodies, floodplains, and fish would not be affected by the proposed project activities.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: No wetlands within or near the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Project would adhere to appropriate best management practices to prevent impacts to groundwater.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: No specially-designated areas were identified within the project area. Land use would not change as a result of project activities.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: No impacts to visual quality. New structures would be consistent and in general vicinity of existing structures.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: The project would have a small, temporary impact on air quality from vehicle emissions and dust generated during construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Some temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: The proposed action would help reduce outage times and maintain reliable power to the region.

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: All work would be completed on BPA fee-owned land.

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

Signed: /s/ Chad Browning

Chad Browning
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: July 19, 2023