

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Gold Beach Substation Expansion Project (*Update to Previous CX issued May 17, 2023*)

**Project No.:** P03993

**Project Manager:** Cynthia Rounds, TEP-TPP-1

**Location:** Coos County, Oregon

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B4.11 Electric power substations and interconnection facilities

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to replace a 115-kilovolt (kV) disconnect switch and reconfigure BPA's 115-kV Gold Beach Substation into a switchyard, in Gold Beach, Curry County, Oregon (Township 37 South, Range 15 West, Section 1 and Township 37 South, Range 14 West, Section 6). The current switching equipment is difficult to maintain and has reached the end of its functional capacity. In addition, operation of the switching equipment in its current configuration poses a safety risk to substation operators. Therefore, the updated switching station configuration is required to ensure system safety and to maintain reliable transmission service to Coos-Curry Electric Cooperative (CCEC). This CX has been updated to reflect the need for CCEC to reroute and underground their existing power line in order for BPA to proceed with the Gold Beach Substation project. This would require the execution of a land use agreement for the new power line route on BPA fee-owned property as well as a funding agreement to reimburse CCEC for their construction expenses.

The project would be completed in phases, and would include:

- Constructing a temporary shoofly consisting of 2 single-pole wood structures: one located within the BPA switchyard and one located within the adjacent CCEC substation yard. The temporary shoofly would be removed following completion of construction.
- Removing two single-pole wood transmission structures and replacing them with two new single-pole steel transmission structures. The new structures will be labeled structure 6/10 on Rogue-Gold Beach No. 1 and structure 6/11 on Rogue-Gold Beach No. 2.
- Removing existing bus work, terminal bays, and in-ground structures, including footings, guy anchors, and an unknown type of underground storage tank. BPA would then level and grade the BPA switchyard.
- Removing the existing chain-link fence between the BPA switchyard and the BPA fee-owned pole yard to the east. BPA would then level and grade to allow vehicle access to the BPA switchyard.
- Constructing two 115-kV bays and associated feeders to the CCEC section of the substation. This work would include installing additional new steel pole structures, 6 new switch stands for new disconnect switches and associated jumpers, and new 115-kV buss pedestals. Each new pole would have a culvert footing.

- Relocating the existing control house to a new location within the switchyard, which would require installing a new concrete foundation and new station service panel and electrical feeders to the relocated control house, yard lighting, and yard outlets.
- Constructing two retaining walls (approximate total length of 160 feet) at the base of the slope just south of the switchyard and pole yard. BPA would remove and replace the existing chain-link fence to accommodate construction of the wall.
- Installing a new grounding grid within the BPA pole yard.
- Restrung and terminating new conductor.

CCEC would reroute and bury their existing power line, which would include:

- Removing three existing wood pole distribution structures and existing above ground power lines located south and west of Gold Beach Substation.
- Replacing one existing wood pole distribution structure with a new wood pole riser located south of Gold Beach Substation.
- Installing one new wood pole riser northeast of Gold Beach Substation in a graveled parking area.
- Installing two new buried, pre-case concrete vaults: one splice vault at the southwest corner of Gold Beach Substation and one vacuum fault interrupter vault at the southeast corner of the substation.
- Installing a total of approximately 1,000 feet of underground power lines. The underground lines would be buried in trenches running east-west between the two new vaults and running north-south between the two new risers.

All decommissioned equipment and excess materials (i.e., the decommissioned CCEC overhead power lines and structures, excavated soils and yard rock, the unknown storage tank, unused poles currently stored in the pole yard) would be removed from the site and disposed of in accordance with all local, state, and Federal regulations. Completion of the project would require the use of heavy equipment, including excavators, cranes, boom trucks, and bucket trucks, as well as light-duty pickup trucks and power tools.

**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/ Walker Stinnette

Walker Stinnette

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:** Gold Beach Substation Expansion Project (*Update to Previous CX issued May 17, 2023*)

## **Project Site Description**

The project site is located at BPA's Gold Beach Substation in Gold Beach, Coos County, Oregon (Township 37 South, Range 15 West, Section 1 and Township 37 South, Range 14 West, Section 6). The site would be accessed via a driveway off of the existing, paved Quarry Road. The majority of ground disturbance would occur within the fenced switchyard and pole yard, which are heavily disturbed and either covered in crushed rock or paved. Little to no vegetation is present within the switchyard and the pole yard. The retaining wall construction and CCEC power line reroute would occur outside of the switchyard and pole yard or within existing power line rights-of-way. These areas are either graveled, paved, or dominated by western sword fern (*Polystichum munitum*) interspersed with common weeds, grasses, and forbes. Riley Creek is located north of Gold Beach Substation on the opposite side of Quarry Road. No wetlands are located within the project site. Land use in the surrounding area is primarily commercial and residential properties, including churches and an elementary school, with undeveloped forested land south of the substation.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

**Explanation:** On January 7, 2022, BPA determined that the proposed undertaking would result in **no historic properties affected** (BPA CR Project No.: OR 2020 089; SHPO Case No. 21-0993). Pursuant to 36 CFR 800.2(c) the consulting parties for this project included: the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, the Coquille Indian Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, and the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua & Siuslaw Indians, the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. No comments were received from the consulting parties.

BPA prepared an addendum to the original determination report issued on January 7, 2022. The addendum included the additional undertaking to reroute and underground the CCEC power lines, which was not included in the original consultation. On June 9, 2023, BPA determined that the original effects determination for the undertaking remains appropriate and the proposed undertaking would result in **no historic properties affected**. On July 6, 2023, the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians responded that the project was outside of their ancestral territory and that they would defer to the appropriate tribes for comment. No other comments were received from the consulting parties.

## 2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The majority of ground-disturbing activities would take place within the previously-disturbed switchyard, pole yard, and surrounding areas. Ground disturbance from the CCEC power line reroute would require temporary ground disturbance in areas that are either graveled, paved, or vegetated with common species. Constructing the new retaining wall would prevent erosion of the slope south of the switchyard and pole yard. Excavated soils would be temporarily stored onsite, and then backfilled and returned to original contours. Temporarily disturbed soils would stabilize as vegetation is reestablished and would eventually return to pre-existing conditions following completion of the proposed action. Standard construction best management practices (BMPs) would minimize erosion and sedimentation. The proposed work would not substantially impact geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Constructing the new retaining wall and rerouting the CCEC power line would crush, strip, or bury vegetation (primarily western sword fern and common weeds, grasses, and forbes) in a small area south of the switchyard and pole yard. There are no known special-status plant species or habitats present at the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would have no effect on special-status plant species or habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary disruption of normal wildlife behavior could occur from elevated noise and human presence during construction. There are no known special-status wildlife species or habitats present at the project site. Work would be limited to existing developed areas (i.e., switch yard, pole yard, and existing transmission line right-of-way) where little to no habitat is present. Therefore, the proposed action would have no effect on special-status wildlife species or habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No water bodies, floodplains, or fish-bearing streams would be directly affected by the proposed action, and standard construction BMPs would prevent indirect impacts to the nearby Riley Creek. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies and floodplains and would have no effect on special-status fish species or habitats.

## 6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present within the project site. Standard construction BMPs would prevent indirect impacts to off-site wetlands, if present.

## 7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is unlikely to impact groundwater or aquifers because the proposed project is contained within a pre disturbed area. Standard construction BMPs would reduce the potential for inadvertent spills of hazardous materials that could contaminate groundwater or aquifers.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change to land use in the project areas and there are no specially-designated areas near Gold Beach Substation.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would result in a perceptible change in the appearance of Gold Beach Substation. Visual changes would include reconfiguration of structures within the switchyard, removal of a fence between the switchyard and an adjacent pole yard, grading between the two yards, installation of the retaining wall, and undergrounding an existing above ground power line. All of these changes would be consistent with the existing visual quality of the area.

## **10. Air Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction activities would result in a minor and temporary increase in dust and vehicle emissions in the local area. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the proposed action.

## **11. Noise**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During construction, use of vehicles and equipment and general construction activities could temporarily and intermittently produce noise at levels higher than current ambient conditions, which could be audible from nearby properties. Construction would occur during daylight hours (approximately between 7:00 AM and 7:00 PM). There would be no long-term change in ambient noise following completion of the project.

## **12. Human Health and Safety**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Prior to construction, BPA would test excavated material and foundations, including the unknown underground storage tank, for hazardous materials. If hazardous materials are identified, then they would be disposed of off-site according to all local, state, and Federal regulations. Standard construction BMPs would minimize risk to human health and safety. Therefore, the proposed action would not be expected to impact human health and 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: Prior to construction, BPA would sample to identify any hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA-excluded petroleum and natural gas products that could be present within the substation yard. If any such materials are identified, then BPA would appropriately manage them according to all local, state, and Federal regulations to ensure there are no uncontrolled or unpermitted releases.

**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 proposed action would occur on BPA fee-owned property or on property where BPA and/or CCEC has, or would acquire, rights from the underlying landowner. BPA would notify, involve, and coordinate with landowners, as necessary.

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

Signed: /s/ Walker Stinnette August 1, 2023  
Walker Stinnette Date  
Environmental Protection Specialist