

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Snipes Substation Switch Installation and Chandler Tap Switch Replacement

Project No.: P04287

Project Manager: Dianne Bonner, TEPL-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 install two new switches on the Grandview-Red Mountain No. 1 transmission line near Snipes Substation and to reconfigure the switch group at the Chandler Tap to Grandview-Red Mountain No. 1 transmission line in Benton County, Washington. The project would update the switch groups to current design standards and improve system reliability.

Snipes Substation: BPA would replace two existing wood pole H-frame transmission structures (11/3 and 11/5 on Grandview-Red Mountain No. 1) with light duty steel (LDS) poles in approximately the same locations. Both of the new structures would be guyed with anchor plates buried 18 to 32 feet from the bases of the structures. BPA would also install two new lattice steel disconnect switch structures and associated switching equipment and hardware approximately 14 feet back-on-line (BOL) from structure 11/3 and approximately 14 feet ahead-on-line (AOL) from structure 11/5. New access road construction and existing access road improvement would be required. In total, approximately 475 linear feet of 20-foot-wide gravel access roads, one new gate, and one new approach would be constructed. BPA could also improve existing access roads within the established and well-defined road prism, including light road grading, smoothing, reshaping, filling irregularities, and adding gravel to existing road surfaces, approaches, and landings.

Chandler Tap: BPA would replace two existing wood pole H-frame transmission structures (14/5 and 14/6 on Grandview-Red Mountain No. 1) with LDS poles in approximately the same locations. The existing lattice steel disconnect switch structures (currently located AOL from structure 14/5 and BOL from structure 14/6) and associated switching equipment and hardware would be replaced and relocated approximately 14 feet BOL from structure 14/5 and approximately 14 feet AOL from structure 14/6. BPA would also replace one existing wood pole H-frame transmission structure (3/9 on Chandler Tap to Grandview-Red Mountain No. 1) with new wood poles in approximately the same location. BPA would install one new lattice steel disconnect switch structure and associated switching equipment and hardware approximately 14 feet BOL from structure 3/9. No new access roads are proposed at this location; although BPA could improve existing access roads as described above.

The proposed action would require removing the existing wood poles, excavating or auguring existing or new holes to the appropriate depth, and then positioning the new structures in place. New hardware would be installed on the structures, and the existing conductor would be reattached. Excavated soil would be used for backfill or spread evenly around the bases of the structures. To complete the project, BPA would use heavy equipment, including line trucks, excavators, dump trucks, and road graders, 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:

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: Snipes Substation Switch Installation and Chandler Tap Switch Replacement

Project Site Description

The project site includes portions of BPA's existing Grandview-Red Mountain No. 1 transmission line right-of-way (ROW) between structures 11/3 and 11/5 near Snipes Substation (Township 10 North, Range 25 East, Sections 34 and 35) and between structures 14/5 and 14/6 near the Chandler Tap (Township 10 North, Range 26 East, Section 32) in Benton County, Washington. All work would occur on BPA fee-owned property or on property where BPA has acquired an agreed upon easement from the underlying landowner. Land use consists of irrigated agricultural fields, rangelands, and heavily disturbed lands at the shoulders of existing roads. These areas are sparsely vegetated with common low-growing grasses, forbs, and sagebrush, and are mostly dominated by row crops or non-native, weedy species. No surface waters or wetlands are present within or near the project site. Outside of the project site, the surrounding area has similar land uses along with some rural residential properties.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: On March 21, 2023, BPA initiated National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 consultation with the following parties:

- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP)

BPA conducted background research and intensive pedestrian and subsurface surveys of the Area of Potential Effects (APE). The Grandview-Red Mountain No. 1 transmission line and the Chandler Tap to Grandview-Red Mountain No. 1 transmission line were identified within the APE and are considered eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. However, the proposed undertaking would neither alter the integrity of the transmission lines, nor diminish any of the standards under which they are considered eligible. No other historic or cultural resources were identified within the APE. Therefore, on July 10, 2023, BPA determined that the proposed undertaking would result in no adverse effect to historic properties (BPA CR Project No.: WA 2023 070; DAHP Log No.: 2023-01-00298-BPA). Concurrence was received from DAHP on July 14, 2023. No other comments were received.

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: The proposed action would cause minor soil disturbance from excavation to remove and install transmission and switch structures, grading and laying gravel to construct and improve access roads, and soil compaction and rutting due to vehicle and equipment use. Excavated soils would be temporarily stored onsite, and then either backfilled and returned to original contours or deposited around the bases of the new structures. 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 be implemented to minimize soil erosion, sedimentation, and fugitive dust. The proposed action would not impact geology.

Notes:

- Reseed disturbed areas during the appropriate time period for germination with a native, regionally-appropriate seed mix, or as agreed upon with the underlying landowners.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: The proposed action could crush, strip, or cover a minor amount of common, low-growing grasses, forbs, and weeds and row crops, where present within the project site. Disturbed areas would be reseeded and would eventually return to pre-existing conditions following completion of the proposed action. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status plant species near the project site, and no suitable special-status species habitat is present.

Notes:

- Reseed disturbed areas during the appropriate time period for germination with a native, regionally-appropriate seed mix, or as agreed upon with the underlying landowners.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary disturbance of normal wildlife behavior and wildlife displacement could occur from elevated noise and human presence during construction. However, there would be no permanent modification of wildlife habitat, and temporarily disturbed or displaced wildlife would likely reoccupy the site following completion of the proposed action. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status wildlife species near the project site, and no suitable special-status species habitat is present.

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 are present within or near the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies or 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 or near the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground disturbance would not reach depths to groundwater, and no new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers are proposed. 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 is consistent with existing land use at the project site. No specially-designated areas would be impacted by the proposed action.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would result in a perceptible change in the appearance the site. However, these changes would be minor relative to the scale of existing structures and equipment and would be consistent with the existing visual quality of the area. The project site is not located in a visually sensitive area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would produce minor and temporary 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: The proposed action would result in minor and temporary noise from the use of vehicles, heavy equipment, and power tools during construction, which could be audible from nearby residential properties. Noise impacts would be temporary and would only occur during daylight hours (approximately 7 AM to 7 PM). There would be no permanent change in ambient noise following completion of the proposed action.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would be completed by transmission line maintenance professionals trained in proper techniques and equipment use. The project would not generate or use hazardous materials and would not create conditions that would increase risk to human health and safety. Therefore, no impacts to human health and safety are expected as a result of the proposed action.

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: The proposed action would occur on BPA fee-owned property or on properties where BPA has acquired an agreed upon easement 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 24, 2023
Walker Stinnette Date
Environmental Protection Specialist