

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: W0923 AT&T Lake Sawyer Antenna Installations

Project Manager: Jonathan Toobian, TEPF-TPP-3

Location: King County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.19 Microwave, meteorological and radio towers, B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow AT&T to install new wireless antennas and associated equipment on its Raver-Covington, No. 2 transmission line on structure 7/2. AT&T would install three new antenna mounts, twelve new panel antennas, six new remote radio units, and three new surge suppression units. Twelve fiber cables and twelve coaxial cables would connect the new antennas to AT&T's ground equipment. BPA would require AT&T to tie into the existing ground grid of the tower structure to protect BPA infrastructure from lightning strikes, this would involve excavation to a depth of 18 inches below grade and within 5 feet of each tower leg. . AT&T is responsible for obtaining an easement for their on-the-ground equipment compound from the underlying landowner.

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:

Katey C. Grange
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 within a transmission right-of-way (ROW), with residential housing, a golf course, and forested areas adjacent to the project location. The subject transmission tower is in Section 5, Township 21 North, Range 6 East. The vegetation in the ROW consists mainly of unknown grasses, Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) and Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*).

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 and determined that this type of activity does not have the potential to cause effects to historic properties or cultural resources, per 36 CFR 800.3 (a).

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The work would occur in a previously-disturbed location. Vehicles and equipment used during antenna installation may result in minor compaction of soils. A small amount of soil excavation would occur to connect to the existing tower grounding grid. The impacts to soils would be minor and there would be no impact to geology.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: A small amount of vegetation would be crushed during antenna replacement activities, but is anticipated to recover quickly after construction. No Federal/state special-status plants would be impacted.

Notes:

- To prevent the spread of noxious weeds, the construction vehicles would be required to be cleaned before entering a new project location.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No special-status species or habitats are present or known to occur at the project location or adjacent surroundings; therefore, the project would not impact any Federal or state special-status species or habitats. Construction activities may temporarily displace

non-special-status wildlife due to temporary elevated noise levels, but there would be no long-term impacts to wildlife.

Notes:

- If any active nests are found on the structure prior to construction, the construction would be delayed until the nest is unoccupied.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is not in a floodplain. The nearest water body is 0.4 miles to the northeast. There would be no impacts to water bodies, floodplains, or fish.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project location is not in or near a wetland. The site is on non-hydric soil, and no hydrology or wetland vegetation is present. There would be no impact to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA requires that AT&T connect their equipment to the existing grounding grid to protect the electrical transmission system from lightning. This would require minimal ground disturbance to a maximum depth of 3 feet. The nearest EPA sole source aquifer is approximately 3 miles northeast of the project location. There would be no impact to groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change to land use at the project location and the project is not occurring within any specially designated areas. There would be no impact on either land use or specially designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minimal impact to visual quality. Wireless antennas and equipment would be compatible with the existing utility infrastructure at this location.

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 significant changes to the air quality during or after construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

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

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no impact on 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: 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: AT&T is responsible for obtaining an easement from the underlying landowner for their on-the-ground equipment. Antenna, fiber, and coaxial cable installation would occur during daylight hours and would be completed within less than a week; therefore, additional landowner notification would not be required.

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 31, 2023
Beth Belanger Date
Environmental Protection Specialist