

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: AT&T Wireless New Telecommunications Site at Sifton Substation

Project No.: W0861

Project Manager: Brian Keith, TELP-TPP-3

Location: Clark County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.19 Microwave, meteorological and radio towers.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow AT&T to establish a new wireless telecommunications site at BPA's Sifton Substation in Vancouver, Clark County, Washington. AT&T would collocate with another telecommunications company that currently maintains an existing wireless site in the southwest corner of the Sifton Substation yard. Telecommunications equipment would be installed on an existing, approximately 150-foot communications structure and within the associated fenced equipment compound located at the base of the structure.

On the existing communications structure, AT&T would install:

- Three V-frame antenna mounts to support the installation of nine panel antennas (one V-frame and three antennas per sector)
- Six remote radio head (RRH) mounts to support the installation of twelve RRHs (two mounts and 4 RRHs per sector)
- Two surge suppressors
- Six direct current power cables and two fiber cables routed up the communications structure on a new waveguide ladder

Within the existing ground-level equipment compound, AT&T would install:

- Equipment and battery cabinets either mounted on a new H-frame or directly supported on a new approximately 17-foot by 8-foot concrete pad
- Additional standard telecommunications equipment, such as GPS antenna, batteries, rectifiers, baseband unit, etc.
- 18-foot cable bridge from the communications structure to the equipment area
- Buried fiber cable and electric service line from existing vaults to the equipment area

All work would occur on the existing communications structure or within the existing, graveled substation yard and equipment compound. The site would be accessed via existing routes of travel. After construction, AT&T would visit the site approximately once every 30 days for routine maintenance and operation.

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:

/s/ Katey C. Grange 11/14/2023
Katey C. Grange Date
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.

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Project Site Description

The project site is located on BPA fee-owned property in the southwest corner of the Sifton Substation yard in Vancouver, Clark County, Washington (Township 2 North, Range 2 East, Section 13). Telecommunications equipment would be installed on an existing, approximately 150-foot tall steel communications tower as well as within an existing ground-level equipment compound, where another telecommunications company maintains an existing wireless site. All ground disturbance would occur within compacted gravel fill that is maintained clear of all vegetation. No water bodies or wetlands are present within or near the project site. The substation is surrounded by suburban residential development.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Sifton Substation was previously determined ineligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Given that all ground disturbance would occur within the existing, graveled substation yard and equipment compound, it is highly unlikely that the proposed undertaking would impact archaeological resources. Therefore, BPA has determined that this undertaking does not have the potential to cause effects to historic properties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All ground disturbance would occur within the existing, graveled substation yard and equipment compound. Therefore, the proposed action would not have a new impact to geology or soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project site is graveled and maintained clear of all vegetation. Therefore, the proposed action would have no effect on plant species or habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary disturbance of normal wildlife behavior could occur from elevated noise and human presence during implementation of the proposed action. However, current ambient noise and disturbances are high in the area given surrounding land use, and many wildlife species that may be present in the area would likely be habituated to high levels of disturbance. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status wildlife species near the project site, and no suitable special-status species habitat is present.

Notes:

- If any active nests are found on the communications tower, the project would be delayed until the EC environmental lead confirms that the nest is unoccupied.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No water bodies or floodplains are present within or near the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies and floodplains and would have no effect on 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: Excavation is unlikely to reach depths to intersect groundwater or aquifers. No new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers is proposed. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The installation of structure-mounted and ground level equipment at an existing telecommunications site would be consistent with the existing land use. The project site is not located in a specially-designated area.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The installation of structure-mounted and ground level equipment at an existing telecommunications site would be consistent with the existing visual quality.

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 produce intermittent and temporary construction-related noise at levels greater than current ambient conditions, 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 long-term change in ambient noise following completion of the proposed action.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not generate or use hazardous materials and would not create conditions that would increase risk to human health and safety. 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 project site is located entirely on BPA fee-owned property. No landowner notification, involvement, or coordination would 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/ Walker Stinnette
Walker Stinnette
Environmental Protection Specialist

11/14/2023
Date