

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Comcast Fiber Installation on North Bonneville-Ross No. 1 and No. 2

Project No.: LURR20230024

Project Manager: Billie Woodman, TERR-ROSS MHQA

Location: Clark County, Washington.

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.7 Fiber optic cable; B4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow Comcast Cable Communications (Comcast) to install two underground conduits for fiber optic cables within BPA fee-owned right-of-way (ROW) between structures 34/3 and 34/4 on the North Bonneville-Ross No. 1 and No. 2 transmission line in Vancouver, Clark County, Washington. On BPA property, Comcast would either trench or excavate a bore pit and conduct a north-south directional bore just east of N. Devine Road. The bore or trench would cross the entire width of the ROW (approximately 300 feet) at a minimum of 36 inches deep. Comcast would then install two, 2-inch-diameter conduits in the bore hole or trench and would run fiber optic cable through the conduits.

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.

Jessica A. Heppler
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: Comcast Fiber Installation on North Bonneville-Ross No. 1 and No. 2

Project Site Description

The project site is within BPA fee-owned North Bonneville-Ross No. 1 and No. 2 transmission line ROW in Vancouver, Clark County, Washington (Township 02 North, Range 02 East, Section 30 (DC 45)). Project activities would be carried out to the west of North Bonneville-Ross No. 1 and No. 2 transmission line structures 34/3 where it passes through the ROW. Ground cover within the project site consists of regularly mowed native and non-native herbaceous species. The ROW further to the east and west of the project site is similarly characterized by open, low-growing, managed herbaceous vegetation, with Burnt Bridge Creek Trail located east of the project site. Outside of the ROW, the surrounding area is a mix of urban commercial, residential, and recreational land uses, with additional wooded areas associated with Burnt Bridge Creek Trail. According to the National Wetland Inventory, there are no wetlands mapped within the project site. However, a freshwater forested/shrub wetland is located approximately 50 feet north-west of the project site, on the west side of N. Devine Road. Soil survey data from the Natural Resources Conservation Service indicates that the project site is characterized by Lauren gravelly loam, which is not hydric. The National Hydrography Dataset indicates that the closest surface water body is Burnt Bridge Creek, which is located approximately 600 feet to the north of the project site.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation Office (DAHP), the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde on September 1, 2023. DAHP provided concurrence with the Area of Potential Effect (APE) via a letter dated September 1, 2023. BPA sent a no effect to historic resources determination on August 20, 2024, and DAHP concurred on August 21, 2024. No additional response was received within 30 days.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Ground-disturbing activities may include excavating a bore pit and boring or trenching north-south along N. Devine Road. In addition, the use of vehicles and heavy equipment would likely result in some minor soil compaction. Soils within and around the project site were previously disturbed during construction of N. Devine Road, and additional fiber installation in the same location. Any excavated holes or trenches would be backfilled with native soils and graded to original contours. The proposed project would not impact geology. Comcast would be responsible for implementing standard construction best management practices (BMPs) to address temporary erosion and sediment control.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions.

Explanation: Use of vehicles and equipment and excavation could result in removal of herbaceous ground cover in small areas in the event of boring, or along the length of the trenched area. The disturbance area is expected to revegetate after project completion. No additional tree or vegetation removal is proposed. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status plant species or plant species protected under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). Therefore, the proposed project would result in No Effect to protected plant species.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Temporary disruption of normal wildlife behavior could occur from elevated noise and human presence during project implementation. However, wildlife species that could be present in the area are likely already habituated to human activity, including vehicle traffic and other activities associated with urban commercial and residential development. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status wildlife species or wildlife species protected under the federal ESA, and no such species or suitable habitat are expected to occur at the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would result in No Effect to protected wildlife species.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: The project site is not located near any surface waters or fish bearing streams and is not located within a floodplain.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: The project site is not located in any mapped wetlands, and soils mapped within the project site are not typically associated with wetlands. With implementation of standard erosion control BMPs, the proposed project would not impact wetlands that are near the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Ground disturbance is unlikely to reach depths to groundwater and no new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers are proposed. Standard BMPs would prevent impacts from unintended spills to groundwater or aquifers. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

Notes: Maintain an oil/fuel spill kit on-site during construction to address containment, cleanup, and disposal in the event of a spill.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: There would be no change in land use at the project site. The proposed project would not impact the nearby Burnt Bridge Creek Trail. No other specially designated areas are in the project vicinity.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Most areas where soil is excavated, and vegetation is removed would gradually become revegetated to pre-existing conditions. The fiber optic cable trench and/or handholes would be underground or flush with the ground surface. The proposed project would not substantially alter the visual quality of the area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary and minor dust and vehicle emissions would increase in the local area from vehicle and equipment use during project implementation. There would be no long-term impact to air quality following completion of the project.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Project-related noise would be temporary and intermittent and would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise would not change from current ambient conditions.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: The project would not generate or use hazardous materials and would not create conditions that would increase risk to human health and safety. No impact to human health and safety is expected as a result of project activities.

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 on BPA fee-owned property. The BPA Realty Specialist would coordinate with Comcast, adjacent landowners, and any nearby ROW easement lessees.

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

Signed:

Jessica A. Heppler
Environmental Protection Specialist