

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Microwave Antenna Installation at Glass Butte Radio Station

**Project Manager:** Vincent “Charley” Majors, TEPF-CSB-2

**Location:** Harney and Lake County, Oregon

**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 install a new 6-foot-diameter microwave antenna on its existing lattice radio tower at Glass Butte. The new microwave antenna would be pipe mounted at the 85 foot level on the 100-foot-tall tower. An elliptical waveguide would also be installed connecting the new microwave antenna to existing equipment inside the equipment building, adjacent to the radio tower. This work is needed to support communication requirements for an existing solar generator. One existing ultra-high frequency (UHF) antenna would be removed from the solar generator’s collector substation, called Best Lane, approximately 20 miles east of Glass Butte. Additionally, one UHF antenna would be removed from the BPA Burns Radio Station, also in Harney County, and approximately 50 miles east of Glass Butte.

The Federal Columbia River Transmission System Act directs BPA to construct, acquire, operate, maintain, repair, relocate, and replace the transmission system, including facilities and structures appurtenant thereto. (16 United States Code [U.S.C] § 838i(b)). The Administrator is further charged with maintaining electrical stability and reliability, selling transmission and interconnection services, and providing service to BPA’s customers. (16 U.S.C § 838b(b-d)). The Administrator is also authorized to conduct electrical research, development, experimentation, tests, and investigation related to construction, operation, and maintenance of transmission systems and facilities. (16 U.S.C § 838i(b)(3)).

**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; 89 FR 34074, April 30, 2024), 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.<sup>1</sup>

Beth Belanger  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment: Environmental Checklist

---

<sup>1</sup> BPA is aware that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), on February 25, 2025, issued an interim final rule to remove its NEPA implementing regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500–1508. Based on CEQ guidance, and to promote completion of its NEPA review in a timely manner and without delay, in this CX BPA is voluntarily relying on the CEQ regulations, in addition to DOE's own regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021, to meet its obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.

# **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:** Microwave Antenna Installation at Glass Butte Radio Station

## **Project Site Description**

The Glass Butte project location is an existing radio tower communication site, which includes a steel lattice tower, an equipment building, three propane tanks and parking area located on a compacted gravel surface. The location is on land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in a location called Glass Butte. Glass Butte is approximately 6,350 feet in elevation. The facility is in Section 22, Township 22 south, Range 22 East in Lake County, Oregon and is 70 miles east of La Pine, Oregon and 50 miles west of Burns, Oregon. US Highway 20 runs east-west and is approximately 2 miles north of the project location. The nearest water resources are an intermittent stream and a freshwater pond about 0.5 miles southwest of the site.

The solar collector's Best Lane substation and radio tower are located in Section 23, Township 23 South, Range 25 East, and the Burns Radio Station is located in Section 20, Township 23 South, Range 30 East; both are in Harney County. Both of these facilities are located on compacted gravel surfaces. The surrounding areas are largely undeveloped. There are no wetlands or waterways in or near either tower locations.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A BPA archaeologist reviewed the project and determined that there was no potential to affect cultural or historic resources. All work is occurring within developed areas and would not involve any ground disturbance.

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The work would not disturb any soils or change geology at the project locations. All areas are developed and work would be conducted from compacted gravel surfaces.

Notes:

- Equipment and vehicles are required to stay on the existing compacted gravel surfaces.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no impact to Federal or state special-status species or habitats because the work areas are developed and work would be conducted from compacted gravel surfaces.

Notes:

- Equipment and vehicles are required to stay on the existing compacted gravel surfaces.
- Vehicles and equipment must be clean and free of any plant material to prevent the spread of noxious weeds.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The Glass Butte Radio Station is located in greater sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) habitat designated by the Oregon Greater Sage Grouse Approved Resource Management Plan Amendment, signed in 2015, as a General Habitat Management Area. There are four known mating (lek) locations in the surrounding area; however, none are close to the project location. There would be no removal of sage grouse habitat and noise disturbances would be of a short duration, with work being conducted outside of the breeding and brood-rearing time periods. The site is also within deer and elk winter range but timing restrictions would be in effect to avoid impacts to those species. No other federal or state special-status species or habitats would be affected by the project.

Notes:

- No work would be conducted during the sage grouse breeding season (March 1 to May 15); however, if there are no active leks in the area, then work may be performed from two hours after sunrise until two hours before sunset.
- No work would be conducted during the brood-rearing season (July 1 to October 31) unless BPA receives an exception from the BLM prior to work starting.
- No work would be conducted during the deer and elk winter range (January 1 to April 30).
- All garbage and food waste must be removed from the site after the work day to deter predators.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no water bodies, floodplains, or fish that would be affected by the project. All work would be conducted from existing graveled surfaces and no ground disturbance would occur.

#### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands in or near the project areas; therefore, there would be no impacts to wetlands.

#### **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no impacts to groundwater or aquifers.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project location is an established radio station. The surrounding area is used for recreational activities, including rock hounding. There would be no change to the land use of the site or surrounding area. Glass Butte is not a specially-designated area.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The location is an existing communications site with several other radio towers in the vicinity. The addition of the microwave antenna would not increase the overall height of the radio tower. The antenna would have a gray finish to reduce glare and blend in with the surrounding area.

Notes:

- Microwave antenna must have a matte gray finish.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A slight increase in vehicle emissions would occur during installation and removal of antennas; however, this would be a temporary increase and air quality levels would not change following project activities.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A temporary increase in construction noise would increase during antenna installation. After construction, operation noise at the site would return to normal.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have no effect on human health or 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: BPA has coordinated with the BLM for work at Glass Butte. No further landowner notification or involvement 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:

Beth Belanger  
Environmental Protection Specialist