

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Winnemucca Substation Equipment Removals

Project No.: N0847

Project Manager: Eric Taylor, TSE-TPP-2

Location: Humboldt County, NV

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.11 Electric power substations and interconnection facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to have BPA-owned substation equipment removed from Nevada (NV) Energy's Winnemucca Substation in Humboldt County, Nevada. NV Energy would remove from service, retire, and dispose of the BPA-owned arrestors, disconnect switches and relays at the substation; the equipment is past its service-life and presents reliability concerns. Then BPA would drain, transfer, transport, and recycle or dispose of all oil from BPA's power circuit breaker at the substation. BPA would then remove the power circuit breaker, including all six bushings from the concrete footings. The concrete footings would remain in-place. The retired equipment would then be packaged for transportation to a BPA-approved landfill or recycling facility.

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 1021.102 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; 90 FR 29676, July 3, 2025 [Interim Final Rule]) and *DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Implementing Procedures* (dated June 30, 2025), BPA has determined the following:

- 1) The proposed action fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021;
- 2) The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion; and

- 3) There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal (see attached Environmental Evaluation).

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.¹

Beth Belanger
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment: Environmental Checklist

¹ 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 the interim final rule to revise DOE NEPA regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021 and NEPA Implementing Procedures (dated June 30, 2025), 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: Winnemucca Substation Equipment Removal

Project Site Description

The NV Energy owned, Winnemucca Substation, is in Humboldt County, near Winnemucca, Nevada. The substation is in the SW ¼ of Section 33, Township 36 North, Range 38 East. The site is situated on flat land, in a valley between mountain ranges. The surrounding area is scrub-shrub habitat with sagebrush as the dominant plant species.

According to the National Hydrography Dataset, there is one mapped intermittent stream approximately 75 feet outside of the southeastern corner of the substation; however, aerial imagery shows no evidence of a stream channel. Whites Creek is located 0.6 miles east of the substation. There are no mapped wetlands near the substation.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Pursuant to its responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and implementing regulations 36 CFR 800, BPA initiated consultation with the Winnemucca Indian Community, Te-Moak Tribe of Western Shoshone, and the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on May 13, 2025. BPA determined that the Winnemucca Substation is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and did not identify any historic properties in the Area of Potential Effect (APE). No responses were received during the 30-day consultation period.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: With the implementation of best management practices, geology and soil are not expected to be impacted by the proposed activities. Soil around the footings of the proposed equipment removals was sampled and it was determined on June 18, 2025, that there is no contamination of soil that would require mitigation. The equipment removal would not require any ground disturbance.

Notes:

- Require spill cleanup kits be onsite during equipment removal and in equipment transport vehicles.
- Follow BPA standards for removal of the breaker and bushing oil to prevent incidental oil leaks.
- Crimp or plug breather tubes to prevent incidental oil leaks.
- Physically secure all retired equipment during transport to the disposal facility to prevent incidental oil leaks.
- Use poly sheeting and oil specific sorbents during transport to contain incidental spills.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The equipment removal is occurring within a substation yard that is devoid of plants. No Federal or state special-status species or habitats would be impacted by the project.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The work would be occurring within an established substation yard where there is no habitat to support any Federal or state special status species. Temporary noise impacts may be slightly above ambient noise levels and are unlikely to disturb any wildlife.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not impact water bodies, floodplains or fish, including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs or habitats.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The equipment removal is occurring within a developed substation yard. There would be no impacts to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Groundwater and aquifers would not be impacted by the project. The substation is located approximately 135 miles from the Eastern Snake River Plain Aquifer. The same requirements identified in the Geology and Soils section above would prevent or limit incidental oil spills that could cause groundwater contamination.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Land use would not change as a result of the project. There are no specially-designated areas that would be impacted by the equipment removal.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The visual quality of the site would not change because it would continue to be operated as a substation by NV Energy.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A minor and temporary increase of vehicle emissions would result from the project; however, there would be no permanent change to air quality from the removal of equipment.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Equipment removal work would occur during daylight hours. Noise levels may increase slightly above the ambient noise levels of the substation during regular operations but would return to normal levels after the work has been completed.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not have any impact 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: It is unknown whether the bushings and power circuit breaker contain polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB). Staff would take precautions to prevent incidental spills from the equipment by following the requirements specified in the geology and soils section above.

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 and NV Energy are coordinating on the equipment removal. No other landowner notification, involvement, or coordination would be necessary.

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