

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: P03275 Fort Rock Compensation Station Fiber Installation

Project No.: P03275/G0527

Project Manager: Lisa Casey, TEPP-3

Location: Lake County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.7 Fiber optic cable; B4.11 Electric power substations and interconnection facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to install new media converters, fiber, and appurtenances at the patch panel inside of BPA's existing Fort Rock Compensation Station (FORT) control house. BPA would also install a customer vault (CV) for Fort Rock Solar outside the FORT Substation fence on BPA fee-owned land. The vault would be installed above ground. A new underground conduit, approximately 90feet long, would be installed by Midstate Electric Cooperative to bring fiber from an existing pole on the southeast side of the substation to the new customer vault. The conduit would be installed by trenching approximately 3 feet deep by 3 feet wide.

BPA proposes to install new supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) equipment, metering systems, a relay, and other equipment inside of the customer's control house at its Fort Rock III Substation. BPA would not fund or carry out any ground-disturbing activities or substation structural modifications at this location.

BPA proposes to install new SCADA equipment, protective relay equipment, and other equipment at the patch panel and relay inside of BPA's existing La Pine Substation control house. Additionally, BPA proposes to install communications & control equipment at BPA's Dittmer and Munro control centers.

BPA's proposed work would be conducted to support the interconnection of Fort Rock Solar into the BPA transmission system. 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 Evaluation

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 main project site is at BPA's Fort Rock Compensation Station located near Fort Rock, Oregon in Lake County. The location is east of the Cascade Mountain Range and within the high desert area of eastern Oregon. The site is in Section 10, Township 27 South, Range 15 East. The dominant vegetation in the fiber installation area consists of rubber rabbitbrush (*Ericameria nauseosa*), with lesser amounts of big sage brush (*Artemisia tridentata*). The nearest mapped stream is located approximately 0.5 miles to the west of the site. The nearest mapped wetland is approximately one mile east.

Indoor work would occur at the customer's solar site control house in Lake County, approximately seven miles northwest of the Fort Rock Compensation Station; at LaPine Substation in Deschutes County, Oregon; and at BPA's control centers in Vancouver and Spokane, Washington.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A BPA archaeologist conducted background research and a field survey, which took place on June 25, 2025. BPA determined that the proposed project would result in no adverse effect to historic properties. On July 1, 2025, BPA sent determination letters to the Oregon State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO), Burns Paiute Tribe, and The Klamath Tribe. SHPO acknowledged receipt of the determination letter on July 2, 2025. The Klamath Tribe responded on July 2, 2025, and had no concerns with the project as described but requested that an archaeological monitor be present during ground disturbing activities. To date, no other responses have been received from the consulting parties.

Notes:

- Archaeological monitoring is required for ground disturbing activities.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Approximately 270 square feet of soil would be temporarily disturbed by project activities. Excavated soil would be used to backfill the trench. There would be no long-term impacts to geology or soils from project activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A minor amount of vegetation would be removed or disturbed during trenching. Vegetation would regrow in areas disturbed by the project. No Federal/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 site is near an area of known wolf activity and within the range of pygmy rabbits and burrowing owls. A site visit determined that there were no dens, burrows, or nests in or near the fiber installation area, which is located near the substation yard fence. Wildlife may temporarily avoid the area during construction; however, there would be no long-term impacts to Federal/state special-status species.

Notes:

- Cover trench route overnight to prevent wildlife from falling into trench.

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 project activities.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands that would be impacted by project activities.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The maximum depth of excavation would be 3 feet deep. The nearest EPA Sole Source Aquifer, Troutdale Aquifer System, is approximately 180 miles northwest of the project site. There would be no impacts to groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no changes to land use. The proposed work is consistent with the current land use at the sites. There are no specially-designated areas near the project locations that would be impacted by project activities.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no impact to visual quality. All work is occurring within existing buildings, except the fiber installation, which would be underground.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A minor increase in emissions from construction equipment would occur during fiber installation, but it would be temporary. There would be no long-term change to air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A minor increase in noise would occur during installation of the fiber; however, the nearest house is over 0.50 miles away and would likely not hear any construction noise. Given the distance between the project area and human-occupied buildings, there would be no noise impacts.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no impacts to human health or safety. Best management practices would be followed to prevent accidents during project implementation.

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 outdoor work is occurring on BPA fee-owned land; landowner notification and coordination are not 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