

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Chief Joseph Substation Property Transfer

Project No.: LURR 20240099

Project Manager: James Luke Kinch, TERR-BELL-1

Location: Douglas County, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B.1.24 Property transfers

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposed to sell about 4.5 acres of BPA fee-owned property to Douglas County Public Utility District (Douglas PUD). About 0.7 acre of BPA fee-owned property is north of Chief Joseph Substation that is currently occupied by the Douglas PUD Foster Creek Substation. Douglas County PUD also seeks to acquire an adjacent area of 1.5 acres of BPA fee-owned land to the southwest of their current substation. The sale of these two parcels would result in landlocked BPA fee-owned land. As a result, BPA also proposes to sell an additional 2.3 acres. Thus, BPA would allow Douglas PUD to purchase a total of approximately 4.5 acres from BPA for the potential future Douglas PUD Foster Creek Substation expansion. Douglas PUD has not created a design yet for their substation expansion, but it would be anticipated to be within the area of land purchased from BPA. Douglas PUD would follow all federal, state, and local laws and regulations in the future when expanding the substation.

BPA is authorized to dispose of its interest in real property pursuant to sections 2(e) and 2(f) of the Bonneville Project Act. 16 U.S.C. § 832a(e)-(f).

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

Christopher Furey
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): 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 parcels that would be acquired by Douglas County PUD are about 1,000 feet north of the Chief Joseph substation fenceline and on the southern and western adjacent sides of Foster Creek Substation. The legal parcel description is Township 29 North, Range 25 East, Section 23. Some of the property has low growing vegetation or some orchard trees on the southwestern parcel. The surrounding area is comprised of dry lands, some irrigated orchards, and developed substation property. The town of Bridgeport, WA is about 1 mile to the northwest. Some wetland areas exist over 1,400 feet to the southeast. Foster Creek is about 1,400 feet to the east, and the Columbia River is about 2,600 feet to the north.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) on March 31, 2025. DAHP concurred with BPA's Area of Potential Effect on April 1, 2025. BPA performed a pedestrian survey and found no cultural resources. Further, the Foster Creek Substation is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). On June 18, 2025, BPA made a determination of no historic properties affected. DAHP concurred on June 25, 2025. No other comments were received during the 30-day consultation period.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance is proposed as a condition of the sale; therefore, there would be no impacts to geology or soils. Douglas PUD's proposed acquisition and associated future work, if they proceed with their substation expansion, would involve soil excavation and grading. Non-paved surfaces would be revegetated with low growing vegetation upon project completion to stabilize disturbed soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance is proposed for the sale of the property; therefore, there would be no impact to plants by the sale itself. There are no federally-listed plants at this location and there would be no effect on Endangered Species Act – listed plant species. The area within the potential substation expansion would be graveled and vegetation would be removed. In the areas adjacent to the proposed substation development, Douglas PUD would plant low growing vegetation and would consider mix of native bare-root shrubs and native herbaceous seeds.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance is proposed for the sale of the property; therefore, there would be no impacts to federal or state special-status species or habitats. The potential future expansion of the Foster Creek Substation onto the land that would be acquired by Douglas PUD would be in an area that would not impact federal or state special-status species or habitats. The acres involved are adjacent to an existing substation, and some of the land has orchard trees and low growing vegetation. Some wildlife, such as birds, would be expected to avoid the area during future construction activities if the PUD proceeds with its substation expansion after the land acquisition.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance is proposed for the sale of the property; therefore, there would be no impacts to water bodies, floodplains, or fish. There are no water bodies, floodplains, or fish in or adjacent to the land to be disposed of to Douglas PUD. No federal or state special-status species, ESUs, or habitats would be affected by Douglas PUD's substation expansion activities within the acreage to be acquired from BPA.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands in or adjacent to the disposal area. No wetlands would be impacted.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance is proposed for the property sale; therefore, there would be no impacts to groundwater or aquifers. Douglas PUD's potential substation expansion and associated work would not impact groundwater or aquifers because the maximum depth of disturbance is currently not expected to exceed 48 inches.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance is proposed for the property sale; therefore, there would be no impacts to land use or specially-designated areas. Douglas PUD would potentially expand their existing substation, and reduce the amount of orchard trees and low growing vegetation with disturbed areas to be reseeded. Douglas PUD would coordinate with the orchard operator as appropriate.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance is proposed for the property sale; therefore, there would be no impacts to visual quality. The potential substation expansion would be visually consistent with the existing Foster Creek substation.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance or vehicle use is proposed for the property sale; therefore, there would be no impacts to air quality. Future design and construction activities by Douglas PUD may result in a small amount of dust and an increase in vehicle emissions.

Douglas PUD would adhere to any federal, state, and local air quality laws, regulations, and ordinances.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance is proposed; therefore, there would be no noise impacts. Douglas PUD's potential future substation expansion may temporarily increase noise during construction activities. Douglas PUD would adhere to any federal, state, and local noise laws, regulations, and ordinances.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no impacts to human health and 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: Douglas PUD currently owns and operates the equipment at the Foster Creek Substation where they would be gaining land ownership. BPA did not identify potential contamination in the undeveloped land included in the sale. The future potential expansion of the Douglas PUD Foster Creek Substation could occur in an area near existing substation equipment that potentially has pollution potential as some equipment could be oil filled. Douglas PUD is expected to continue to operate and construct any expansion in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and ordinances that would prevent the uncontrolled or unpermitted release of pollutants or contaminants.

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 Realty is in coordination with BPA Transmission and Douglas County PUD and the neighboring landowner.

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

Signed:

Christopher H. Furey
Environmental Protection Specialist