

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Cold Creek Yard Expansion

Project No.: P07034

Project Manager: Erin Couch, NWMM-1

Location: Clark County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to expand the Cold Creek Yard located on the Ross Complex, by converting BPA fee-owned rights-of-way into a level, gravel laydown and storage area east of, and immediately adjacent to, the current Cold Creek Yard's laydown area.

The Cold Creek Yard would expand about 300 feet to the east and would be about 700 feet long, north-to south. The expansion would convert about 4.4 acres of regularly mowed, transmission line rights-of-way to a gravel yard. About 1,200-1,500 cubic yards of soil would be imported to the expansion area from off site. Imported soils may come from the excavation and creation of the Ross Central Stormwater Facility (RCSF) pond, and the creation of parking lots E and F on the Ross Complex. The imported soil and expansion area would be rocked and graded to create a level surface. About 12 mature trees would be cut and removed to allow for the expansion.

Perimeter security fencing would be removed and replaced with updated fencing at the yard's new perimeter boundary line. BPA would remove pasture fencing and retire underground water and electrical utility infrastructure. Stormwater from the yard expansion area would be diverted to the existing stormwater infrastructure system or to one or two bioretention swales (about 6,500 square feet in total size) that could be constructed onsite, if connecting to the existing infrastructure is not practicable.

Vehicles and heavy equipment traveling to the expansion area would go through the Cold Creek Yard's existing security gate located at Minnehaha Street. No vertical storage racks or tent structures would be installed, no retaining walls, and no new impervious surfaces (i.e., asphalt) would be installed in the expansion area.

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 BPA 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

Becky Hill
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 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: Cold Creek Yard Expansion (P07034)

Project Site Description

The project site is located on BPA fee-owned property within BPA's Ross Complex located in Vancouver, Washington. The Ross Complex is split north-south by a riparian corridor associated with Cold Canyon Creek and Burnt Bridge Creek, which are designated freshwater critical habitat for Lower Columbia River coho salmon. This east-west riparian corridor connects the creeks and their floodplains to freshwater-forested shrub wetlands located along both sides of Highway 99 and Interstate-5.

The Cold Creek Yard is located at the eastern end of the Ross Maintenance Headquarters, which is located in the northern portion of the bisected Ross Complex. The 4.4-acre expansion area contains some mature trees but is primarily a grass field that is maintained for low-growing vegetation. The project site includes three steel-lattice structures associated with the Bonneville PH 1-Alcoa 1&2 No. 2, Sifton-Ross No. 1, Ross-Lexington No. 1, Ross-Alcoa 2&4 No. 4 and Ross-Alcoa No. 3 transmission lines. Northeast Minnehaha Street is located immediately to the north of the existing Cold Creek Yard, and the existing Cold Creek Yard is located to the south and the west of the expansion area. A residential cul-de-sac neighborhood is located immediately east of the expansion area, such that BPA's new perimeter fence would be about 120 feet away from the nearest residential structure.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: On June 30, 2025, the BPA archaeologist and historian initiated Section 106 consultation with the Cowlitz Indian Tribe and the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP).

BPA determined that implementation of the proposed undertaking would result in no historic properties affected because the proposed work would occur in an undeveloped area located north of the Ross Complex historic district, and the area contains no contributing features to the district. During cultural resource surveys, the BPA archaeologist identified a site of interest, but determined it is not eligible.

DAHP emailed a concurrence letter on June 30, 2025. No responses were received from the Cowlitz Indian Tribe. Therefore, Section 106 Consultation concluded on July 30, 2025.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA will require that work be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA and in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The expansion of the Cold Creek Yard would convert about 4.4 acres of regularly mowed, transmission line rights-of-way area to a gravel yard. The expansion area would receive about 1,200-1,500 cubic yards of tested soils from RCSF and parking lot development areas on the Ross Complex. The expansion area would be graded and bladed and would receive surface. Best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented to prevent the migration of sediment off-site.

Notes:

- Test soils for hazardous materials, which if found, would be disposed of off-site according to local, state, and federal regulations.
- Implement a BPA-approved Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) during construction.
- Revegetate disturbed areas with a native seed mix appropriate for the region, as soon as practicable after project completion in disturbed areas.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Some shrubs, blackberry bushes, and up to 15 mature trees would be cut and removed from the site, including cedar trees, Douglas-fir trees, cottonwood and maple trees. No special-status plant species or suitable habitat for special-status plant species are present within the project area. Therefore, the proposed action would have no effect on special-status plant species or habitat.

Notes:

- Implement a BPA-approved revegetation plan as soon as practicable after disturbance.
- Revegetate disturbed areas with a native seed mix appropriate for the region, as soon as practicable after project completion.
- Work with the City of Vancouver to communicate BPA's tree removal needs and landscaping plans, and adhere to the Tree, Vegetation, and Soil Plan (TVSP), which is consistent with the City of Vancouver Municipal Code 20.770, Tree, Vegetation, and Soil Conservation, when feasible.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Minor and temporary disturbance of wildlife could occur from elevated noise during construction. While the expansion area is adjacent to the Maintenance Headquarters where human activity is frequent, generalist wildlife species acclimated to regularly mowed fields and urban areas (shrubs and trees next to residences), may be present, but are likely already used to human presence and noise. Species that currently use the area (small rodents, urban wildlife) may be displaced to alternative urban habitats when construction begins.

No special-status wildlife species or suitable habitat is present within the project area. Therefore, the proposed action would have no effect on special-status wildlife species or habitats.

Notes:

- Remove trees and shrubs between August 15 and February 15 to avoid impacts to potentially breeding arboreal species or nesting migratory birds, if present.
- Work with the City of Vancouver to communicate BPA's tree removal needs and landscaping plans, and adhere to the TVSP, which is consistent with the City of Vancouver Municipal Code 20.770, Tree, Vegetation, and Soil Conservation, when feasible.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The proposed action includes installation of new and modification of existing stormwater management infrastructure, which would be built in accordance with all applicable local, state, and Federal regulations. No water bodies or special-status fish species are present within the project site, and the project site is not located within a floodplain.

During construction, BMPs would prevent indirect impacts to off-site water bodies, floodplains, special-status fish, and fish habitat. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies, floodplains, fish, or fish habitat.

Notes:

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

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No wetlands are present within the project area. BMPs would prevent impacts to off-site wetlands. Therefore, the proposed action would have no effect on wetlands.

Notes:

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

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Ground disturbance is unlikely to reach depths to groundwater and no new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers are proposed. 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: The conversion of BPA fee-owned rights-of-way property (maintained for low-growing vegetation) to a graveled yard would be consistent with the surrounding land uses at the Ross Complex.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The conversion of BPA fee-owned rights-of-way property (maintained for low-growing vegetation) to a graveled yard is consistent with the existing infrastructure at the Ross Complex, including the adjacent Cold Creek Yard which already exists. The public traveling on NE Minnehaha Street may not notice the change. The houses located in the cul-de-sac are the most prominent visual receptors for the change. The removal of the field and replacement with a gravel yard and BPA's equipment may have a low impact to the visual

quality of some residences, however, existing, mature, deciduous shrubs and trees (located in the backyards and not to be altered by BPA), would continue to provide seasonal visual screening from the existing yard and the yard expansion. Therefore, the proposed action would have a low impact on visual quality to some receptors.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Exhaust and dust from construction activities may temporarily reduce air quality in the immediate project area. As part of the SWPPP, a plan to control dust generation would be implemented as needed. With an appropriate dust control mitigation plan, the project would have minor and temporary impacts to air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During construction, use of vehicles and equipment and general construction activities would create noise above current ambient conditions. However, noise impacts would be temporary and intermittent and would only occur during typical working hours, approximately 7:00 am to 7:00 pm.

Temporary construction-related noise would be audible from the nearby residential properties surrounding the project area, however, there would be no long-term change in ambient noise following completion of the project.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction would be completed by qualified professionals who would follow all applicable safety requirements as detailed in their BPA-accepted site-specific safety plan, in accordance with BPA Contractor Safety and Health Requirements for Prime and Subcontractors, and any additional state, local, or authority having jurisdiction requirements. The safety plan would be maintained on-site during construction and updated, as needed. Work areas would be secured when construction crews are not present.

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: Surveys of the project area and potentially imported soils from the Ross Complex have not indicated hazardous substances or contaminants. A qualified industrial hygiene firm has written a Hazardous Materials Management Plan for implementation in the unlikely event that problematic materials are identified during the project. This firm would be available for additional sampling and direction throughout the project to ensure that hazardous substances or pollutants are not released in an uncontrolled manner.

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 proposed action would occur on BPA fee-owned property. Landowners near the project area would be notified by BPA's Real Property Services prior to commencing construction activities.

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

Signed:

Becky Hill
Environmental Protection Specialist