

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: FAA Microwave Antenna Installation at Augspurger Mountain Radio Site

Project Manager: Erik Lane – TPCV-TPP-4

Location: Skamania County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.19 Microwave, meteorological and radio towers

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is proposing to allow the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to install a 2- to 3-foot-wide microwave dish on the south-east side of the two-story control building at BPA's Augspurger Mountain Radio Site. The mounting location of the microwave dish on the BPA owned building is on existing brackets from equipment that was previously installed and removed. The FAA would install the antenna on the existing dish brackets and install cable from the dish to an existing telco board inside of the building. Cabling efforts may require routing cable through holes to be drilled through the building wall but may also be accomplished using existing openings. Electronic equipment associated with the microwave dish would be installed on an existing telecommunication board inside the building.

BPA authorizes the use of and manages its fee-owned lands pursuant to its authority under 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

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.

Jessica A. Heppler
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

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

BPA's Augspurger Mountain communication site is located on BPA fee-owned land in southeast Skamania County, Washington in T3N R9E Section 21. Project activities would be carried out both within and on the south-east side of the communications building. Ground cover within the project area consists of gravel surfaces maintained for no vegetation growth. Outside of the project area, the surrounding property is primarily managed by the US Forest Service. According to the National Wetland Inventory, there are no wetlands mapped within the project area, nor are hydric soils present according to soil survey data from the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: All project actions meet the Manual for Built Resources "Activities Requiring Screening" 3.1 (addition of new equipment on the exterior of the building; creating holes in building for equipment). Pursuant to the *Programmatic Agreement between BPA, the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, the Washington State Historic Preservation Office, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to Implement the BPA Manual for Built Resources* no further Section 106 review or consultation is required.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Due to the lack of ground-disturbing activities, geology and soils are not anticipated to be affected by project actions.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Due to the lack of ground disturbing activities as well as the lack of plant presence in the project site, there are not anticipated to be any effects to plants at the proposed project site. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status plant species or plant species protected under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA).

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions.

Explanation: The project could briefly impact local wildlife from slightly elevated noise and human presence during the installation of the microwave dish on the outside of the communications building. The project area is adjacent to the designated Critical Habitat for Northern Spotted Owl located 150 feet to the west of the project area. There are no known

Northern spotted Owl nesting sites within 0.5 mile of the project area and with the implementation of the timing restriction, the work is anticipated to have no effect on Northern spotted owl. No other special-status species or designated habitat is present within the project area.

Notes:

- Microwave dish installation would occur outside the Northern Spotted Owl critical nesting period of March 15-September 30.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: No water bodies, floodplains, or fish are present. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies or floodplains and would have no effect on fish species or habitats.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Project site is not within a wetland, nor are there hydric soils present in the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Project actions would not disturb soil or include any other activities that could impact aquifers and groundwater.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: There would be no change in land use or specially designated areas as a result of this project.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Adding a microwave dish on the existing control building is expected to be a minor alteration to visual quality and would remain consistent with the overall visual characteristics of the site.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Depending on the equipment used, temporary and minor dust and vehicle emissions could increase in the local area during project implementation. There would be no long-term impact to air quality following completion of the project.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours. No ongoing noise increase is expected for this area as a result of this project.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: The project would not generate or use hazardous materials and would not create conditions that would increase risk to human health and safety. No impact to human health and safety is expected as a result of project activities.

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 project site is on BPA fee-owned property. There are no other landowners that would need to be notified or involved.

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

Signed:

Jessica A. Heppler
Environmental Protection Specialist