

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Surprise Lake Substation Trenching and Cable Replacement

Project No.: LURR 20250289

Project Manager: Ryan Tanner – TERR-3

Location: Pierce County, Washington.

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way, B1.7 Electronic equipment

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow the City of Milton (City) to replace and install cabling and other electronic equipment at BPA-owned Surprise Lake Substation in Pierce County, Washington. The City would mechanically excavate a trench from City-owned property across BPA-owned substation property to the substation fence. A vac-truck would be utilized to excavate the trench section from the substation fence to a City-owned vault within the Surprise Lake Substation yard. Total trenching efforts would result in a trench 20 feet long, 3.5 feet wide, and 2.5 feet deep. The City would replace additional cabling from the City-owned vault, to substation equipment through already existing conduit in the substation yard.

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

Jessica A. Heppler
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 project site is located at BPA-owned Surprise Lake Substation in Pierce County, Washington (T20N R4E Section 5). Ground cover at this site comprises maintained gravel surfaces consistent with the substation yard and parking areas outside the substation. Outside the substation property, the surrounding area is characterized by a mixture of residential, maintained green areas, and agricultural land uses. The National Wetland Inventory and the soil survey data from the Natural Resources Conservation Service indicates no wetlands or hydric soils found in the project area.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: The BPA archaeologist initiated Section 106 consultation with a determination of no historic properties affected on September 5th, 2025 with the Puyallup Tribe of Indians and the Puyallup Tribe Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO). No comments were received from consultation parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: There would be temporary soil disturbance from the trenching and trenching equipment. However, all digging activities would be occurring in graveled areas of disturbance just outside, and within the substation yard. Geology is not anticipated to be affected.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Trenching would occur in areas that are graveled and maintained to prevent vegetation growth. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status plant species, or plant species protected under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) occurring at either project site. Therefore, the proposed project would result in No Effect to protected plant species.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Temporary disruption of normal wildlife behavior could occur from elevated noise and human presence during project implementation. However, wildlife species near the project area that could be present are likely already habituated to human activity, including vehicle traffic and other activities associated with substation operation. There are no documented

occurrences of any special-status wildlife species or suitable habitat at the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would result in No Effect to protected wildlife species.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: The project site is not located near any surface waters or fish bearing streams and is not located within a floodplain.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: The project action area is not within or near a wetland.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Project activities are unlikely to reach depths that would affect groundwater, or aquifers.

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: The proposed trenching would result in some minor, but temporary visual quality changes to the project site. Trenches will be refilled, and the site would remain maintained for no vegetation growth.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Depending on the vehicles and 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 projects 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