

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Engine Generator Replacements at Easton, Foster Creek, and Malaga Radio Stations

Project No.: P05284

Project Manager: Jennifer Bachman, TEPF-CSB-2

Location: Chelan, Douglas, Kittitas counties, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine maintenance

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to replace the propane engine generators (EGs) that provide emergency power supply at three radio stations in the Wenatchee District: Easton Radio Station, Foster Creek Radio Station, and Malaga Radio Station. The emergency power supply systems, which provide backup electrical power to the radio stations when primary service has failed, are increasingly unreliable due to age and unavailability of replacement parts. Therefore, the proposed project is required to maintain the overall reliability of the bulk electric system.

Inside each of the radio station buildings, BPA would replace the existing EG, automatic transfer switch, fuel systems, and associated electrical and mechanical components, including panels, equipment cabinets, alarms, disconnects, breakers, EG batteries and battery chargers, conduit, and wiring. The existing EGs would be drained of fuel/oil and packaged for transportation to a BPA facility and processed according to all local, state, and federal regulations. To accommodate the new EGs and to comply with code requirements, fuel plumbing, engine air intake and exhaust ducting, propane ventilation fans, and/or high temperature exhaust fans could be installed, replaced, and/or reconfigured, as necessary in the respective radio station buildings. Some modifications to existing roof/wall penetrations or new penetrations could be required. New 2.5-foot by 4-foot steel storage boxes for spare parts and tools would also be installed in the building.

Due to the age of the radio station buildings, hazardous building materials could be present, and targeted testing and abatement may be necessary prior to construction. All decommissioned materials and equipment and construction waste would be safely disposed of according to all local, state, and federal regulations.

The proposed EG replacement work would also include replacing the existing propane tanks and supply lines located outside the buildings within a fenced and graveled yard. Existing propane tanks would be removed and replaced with new tanks that would be mounted on concrete pads. Trenching for the propane supply lines would include digging a trench approximately 2 to 3 feet wide and 2 feet deep between the propane tank and the radio station building. To access the yard for propane tank removal and installation, part of the fence would be temporarily removed to allow access and then replaced in the same location.

After the new propane tanks have been installed, bollards would be installed into the ground around the tanks for protection.

Road improvements would occur along portions of the existing access roads to Foster Creek and Malaga radio stations. No access road work is proposed for the Easton Radio Station work. Road work would include:

- Foster Creek Radio Station improvements would occur along approximately 3,850 feet of access road. Improvements would mainly include light grading to smooth existing ruts, potholes, and washboards and laying down gravel to level the road surface within the existing road prism. Additionally, approximately 900 feet of access road to the Foster Creek radio station would be widened by about five feet where the road narrows adjacent to a steep slope to provide safer access to the site.
- Malaga Radio Station improvements would occur along the approximately 14,000-foot-long access road from Stemilt Loop Road to the radio station. Improvements would mainly include light grading to smooth existing ruts, potholes, and washboards and laying down gravel to level the road surface within the existing road prism. In addition, one ranch gate along the Malaga Radio Station access road would also be replaced in-kind by excavating the postholes and then removing and replacing the gate posts.

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

Jeremy Doschka
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Evaluation

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 evaluation 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: Engine Generator Replacements at Easton, Foster Creek, and Malaga Radio Stations

Project Site Description

Easton Radio Station is located on BPA fee-owned land surrounded by U.S. Forest Service (USFS) property (Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest) within existing transmission line right-of-way (ROW) at structure 92/1 on Olympia-Grand Coulee No. 1 (also known as structure 48/1 on Covington-Bettas Road No. 1) near Easton, Kittitas County, Washington (Township 21 N, Range 13 East, Section 31). No wetlands or water bodies are present near the radio station. Outside of the radio station compound, the ROW consists of routinely managed, low-growing vegetation with undeveloped forest abutting the ROW on both sides. Forested areas occur outside of the transmission line corridor and are mapped as Designated Critical Habitat for northern spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*), which is listed as a Threatened species under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). Interstate 90 is located approximately 1,200 feet north of the radio station.

Foster Creek Radio Station is located on BPA fee-owned property approximately 100 feet southeast structure 31/3 on Grand Coulee-Foster Creek No. 1 near Bridgeport, Douglas County, Washington (Township 29 N, Range 26 East, Sections 30 and 31). Access to the radio station includes direction of travel roads crossing Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed lands. No work is proposed on direction of travel roads. Little to no vegetation is present within the graveled areas. No wetlands or water bodies are present near the radio station or access road. Outside of the radio station compound, surrounding land use is primarily agricultural interspersed with isolated areas of undeveloped shrub steppe habitat.

Malaga Radio Station is located on BPA fee-owned property approximately 1,800 feet (0.35 miles) northwest of structure 19/4 on Sickler-Schultz No. 1 near Malaga, Chelan County, WA (Township 21 North, Range 21 East, Sections 17 and 18; Township 21 North, Range 20 East, Section 13). Little to no vegetation is present within the graveled areas. No wetlands or water bodies are present near the radio station or access road. Outside of the radio station compound, surrounding land use is primarily undeveloped shrub steppe with forested areas further beyond.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: At Easton Radio Station, no previously-recorded archaeological resources were identified within the Area of Potential Effect (APE). Two historic built environment resources considered eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) were identified within the APE: Easton Radio Station and the Olympia-Grand Coulee No. 1 transmission line. However, the proposed project would not alter the integrity or eligibility of either resource. Therefore, BPA determined on February 29, 2024, that the project would result in no adverse effect to historic properties (BPA CR Project No.: WA 2022 120c, DAHP Log No.: 2024-03-01483-BPA). The consulting parties included:

- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
- Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP)

Concurrence with BPA's determination was received from Washington DAHP on May 16, 2024. No other comments were received.

At Foster Creek Radio Station, one previously-recorded, NRHP listed archaeological resource was identified within the APE: Rufus Woods Lake Archaeological District (Site Number 45DT00010). One historic built environment resource considered eligible for inclusion in the NRHP was identified within the APE: Foster Creek Radio Station. The proposed project would avoid Rufus Woods Lake Archaeological District and would not alter the integrity or eligibility of Foster Creek Radio Station. Therefore, BPA determined on February 22, 2024, that the proposed undertaking would result in no adverse effect to historic properties (BPA CR Project No.: WA 2022 120a, DAHP Log No.: 2024-02-01242-BPA). The consulting parties included:

- Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
- Washington Department of Natural Resources
- Bureau of Land Management Spokane District – Wenatchee Field Office
- Washington DAHP

Concurrence with BPA's determination was received from Washington DAHP on March 21, 2024. No other comments were received.

At Malaga Radio Station no previously-recorded archaeological resources were identified within the APE. One historic built environment resource considered eligible for inclusion in the NRHP was identified within the APE: Malaga Radio Station. However, the proposed project would not alter the integrity or eligibility of Malaga Radio Station. Therefore, BPA determined on March 6, 2024, that the proposed undertaking would result in no adverse effect to historic properties (BPA CR Project No.: WA 2022 120b, DAHP Log No.: 2024-03-01597-BPA). The consulting parties included:

- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
- Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
- Washington DAHP

Concurrence with BPA's determination was received from Washington DAHP on May 16, 2024. No other comments were received.

Notes:

- Provide an avoidance map to construction crews noting the area where the APE intersects a cultural resource boundary. Crews would be instructed to not lay down rock in this area.
- Implement the Post Review Discovery Procedure in the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during implementation. Discontinue all ground-disturbing activity 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

Explanation: Ground disturbing activities would include light grading from road improvements within the existing access roadway fill prism at Foster Creek and Malaga radio stations, including about 900 feet of road widening on the Foster Creek access road (approximately 4,500 square feet of disturbance). Trenching for propane tank supply lines would occur at all project sites within the graveled yards of the radio station buildings. Spoils would be temporarily side cast and used to backfill the trenches. Best management practices (BMPs) for temporary erosion and sediment control would be implemented. Minor ground disturbance would also occur during the installation of the bollards around the propane tanks.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status species, including ESA-listed plant species, are present.

Approximately 4,500 square feet of grasses and forbs would be removed or disturbed from road widening activities at Foster Creek. The remaining road improvements would occur within the existing road prism and trenching activities would be in the graveled areas of the radio station yard, which are mostly devoid of vegetation.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary wildlife disturbance could occur from construction noise during the day. Wildlife would access adjacent habitat during disturbance and would return upon completion. Most of the EG replacement work would occur inside the existing radio station buildings at each of the project sites with some trenching work outside within the fenced yard of the radio station buildings.

In accordance with the ESA, BPA obtained an official species list from USFWS on September 5, 2025. After a review of the recorded ESA-listed species observations and habitat surrounding each of the project sites, BPA determined that the project would have “No Effect” on any ESA-listed species or candidate species or their designated critical habitat at any of the three radio station sites.

Northern spotted owl critical habitat surrounds the Easton radio station. Owl detections in any direction of the radio station are over 3 miles away. Most of the work would occur inside the radio station building with the exception of digging an approximately 12-foot-long trench in the yard outside the building. Interstate 90 is within 1,200 feet of the radio station and is currently under construction and would be under construction when the EG work is performed at the radio station. Additionally, the existing engine generator at the radio station runs intermittently, which would also contribute to base line noise levels. The proposed trenching would involve short-term, temporary noise that would not exceed baseline noise levels at the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would have no effect on northern spotted owl, northern spotted owl designated critical habitat, or other protected wildlife species.

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, fish, or fish habitat at any of the project sites or where access road improvements would occur.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands at or adjacent to any of the project sites or where access road improvements would occur.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground excavation at the project sites would not reach depths to ground water, and standard construction BMPs would reduce the potential for inadvertent spills of hazardous materials that could contaminate groundwater or aquifers. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The land use would not change at any of the project sites. There are no specially-designated areas near any of the project sites.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During construction, the presence of equipment and general construction activities would cause temporary visual impacts. Permanent changes at each project site would include replacing the propane tanks and installing bollards, which would be consistent with the existing visual quality of the radio station building and yard. The project sites are not located in a visually sensitive area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would produce minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions in the local area. The new propane engine generators would be maintained and operated in the same manner as the existing engine generators. There would be no permanent change in air quality following completion of the proposed action.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would result in minor and temporary noise from the use of vehicles and equipment during construction. Noise impacts would be temporary and would only occur during daylight hours. There would be no permanent change in ambient noise following completion of the proposed action.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All standard safety protocols would be followed throughout implementation of the proposed action to minimize risk to human health and safety. Therefore, the proposed action would not be expected to impact 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: 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 proposed action would occur in areas where BPA has acquired easements from the underlying landowners. BPA would notify, involve, and coordinate with underlying and adjacent landowners, as necessary.

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

Signed:

Jeremy Doschka
Environmental Protection Specialist