Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: Physical Security System Upgrade at Midway Substation

Project No.: P06207

Project Manager: Jennifer Bachman, TEPF-CSB-2

Location: Yakima, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.11 Fencing, B1.3 Routine Maintenance, B2.2 Building and equipment installation

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to upgrade the perimeter fence and install new electronic security systems at Midway Substation. BPA would remove the existing 7-foot-tall chain-link perimeter fence and would install approximately 4,400 feet of new 8-foot-tall, medium security steel mesh fence topped with razor wire. In-ground concrete footings supporting the fence poles would be removed and replaced with larger footings to support the taller fence. Three-inch-deep switchyard rock would be added and extend out 6 feet on both sides of the fence for stability and grounding protection.

The new fence would occupy the same footprint as the old fence, except for one area on the north side of the substation near the entrance gate; in this location, the fence would be extended to include a new 1-acre area outside the current substation yard. Within this newly fenced area, BPA would re-grade and pave approximately 100 feet of the existing gravel entrance road, and the rest of the area would remain vegetated.

BPA would also remove existing gates and install three new swing gates, one personnel gate with badge access, and one motorized tilt gate with badge access. Existing cattle guards would be removed and replaced with pavement, matching the existing adjacent pavement section. Within the substation yard BPA would install cameras, replace fiber optic cable on existing wood poles, remove 13 wood poles no longer in use, and run new cable though existing conduit and vaults to the control house. Within the control house, BPA would install new control cabinets and ancillary equipment as well as a physical access control system, an intrusion detection system, and an integrated video assessment and surveillance system.

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.

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Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

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Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Evaluation

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: Physical Security System Upgrade at Midway Substation

Project Site Description

The proposed project is located at BPA's Midway Substation on the Hanford Site, which is managed by US Department of Energy – Richland (DOE-RL) at Section 14 of Township 13 North, Range 24 East. The surrounding vegetation cover is classified as Big Sagebrush/Sandberg's Bluegrass-Cheatgrass. The Columbia River is located 0.7 mile to the north. The disturbance for construction would be limited to the BPA transmission facility and surrounding lands. Within this area, vegetation growth is regularly managed by mechanical and chemical means, spill containment structures are present, and soils have been previously disturbed.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: Pursuant to its responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and implementing regulations 36 CFR 800, BPA initiated consultation with the Nez Perce Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, and the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) on March 10, 2025, and with the Hanford Tribal Working Group on April 17, 2025, which includes the Nez Perce Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, and the Wanapum Tribe (WA DAHP# 2025-03-01626, BPA Project # WA 2025 248).

On August 27, 2025, BPA shared with consulting parties a No Adverse Effect to Historic Resources determination and a cultural resources survey. On September 8, 2025, DAHP concurred with the determination of effect with the stipulation to halt work and inform the appropriate Native American Tribes for any unanticipated find. There were no further responses from the consulting parties within a 30-day response period.

Notes:

- If cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, 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. See BPA's Post Review Discovery Procedure.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: The new fence footings would be larger than the current footings and require soil removal. Excavation would occur where soils have been previously disturbed when the substation was originally built. BPA determined that soils at this site are not contaminated and may be used for backfill or disposed of on site. Temporary stockpiles of topsoil and excavated soil would be stored within the substation yard and would be protected by erosion and sediment control devices. Any soil that is not reused for fill would be disposed of at a designated location.

Notes:

- Utilize Best Management Practices (BMPs) to limit soil transport by wind and water during construction and during soil storage and disposal.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: Plants bordering the entrance road and the new northern fence boundary would be crushed or smothered over a small area (less than 0.3 acre). In addition, plants growing along the existing fenceline would be cleared prior to the fence replacement. There are no special-status or sensitive plant species within the project area. A population of ESA-listed Umtanum desert buckwheat (*Eriogonum codium*) is located on a basalt ridge 0.25-mile southeast of the project area. Project activities would have no direct effects on Umtanum desert buckwheat, and indirect effects would be avoided by implementing best management practices (see Notes). Therefore, the project would have no effect on Umtanum desert buckwheat.

Notes:

- To avoid sparking a wildfire that could affect ESA-listed Umtanum desert buckwheat population, all vehicles must stay on graveled or paved surfaces.
- Coordinate with Hanford Fire Marshal during construction and abide by his recommendations based on fire danger levels.
- Clean vehicles of mud and plant material before entering the Hanford Site to reduce the spread of noxious weeds.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: Terrestrial wildlife would be excluded from the approximately 1-acre area that would be incorporated into the substation yard near the entrance gate. However, the amount of habitat lost is small relative to the amount available at the Hanford site. There are no ESA-listed wildlife species, designated critical habitat, nor other sensitive species within or adjacent to the project area. Avoidance and minimization measures would be implemented to avoid impacts to migratory birds (see Notes).

Notes:

- The migratory bird nesting season in the project area is March 15 to July 15. Personnel working on the project must be instructed to watch for nesting birds. If a nest is found, or if defensive bird behaviors are observed (e.g. flying at workers, refusal to leave area, strident vocalizations), stop work and contact the Hanford Site MBTA lead.
- Vegetation along the existing fenceline and entrance road would be cleared prior to March 15 to avoid disturbing nesting migratory birds.

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, or fish within the project area. Standard erosion and sediment control Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be used for ground disturbance and road improvements to protect water resources and avoid and minimize erosion, soil sloughing, and other surface alterations. Any spills would be addressed immediately and follow BPA protocol for cleanup and regulatory notification.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present within the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Excavation for fence construction would not be deep enough to reach groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: The project would not result in changes to land use or specially-designated areas. The Midway Substation is located on the DOE-RL Hanford Site and advanced planning and coordination is required to obtain permission for site access.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The new security fence would be slightly taller and more opaque than the existing fence, resulting in minimal changes to visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minor, temporary effects on air quality during construction caused by fuel emissions and dust from construction equipment. There would be no lasting change to air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction activities would create elevated noise during daytime hours. There would be no lasting change to baseline noise.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Workers would be required to follow all applicable state and federal safety standards.

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: Midway Substation is a BPA-owned substation located on the Department of Energy Handford Site. Advanced coordination is required to obtain site access. The BPA environmental lead coordinated with Hanford DOE-RL and Hanford Mission Integration Solutions Ecological Monitoring and Compliance team.

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

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