

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Palouse Junction Solar Facility and Battery Storage Interconnection Projects

Project No.: G0689 and G1079

Project Manager: Brian Salois, TFPC-TRI CITIES RMHQ

Location: Franklin County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.7 Fiber optic cable, B4.11 Electric power substations and interconnection facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to install electronic equipment and fiber optic cable to facilitate the interconnection of One Energy Development LLC's Palouse Junction (G0689) 10 MW solar facility and 10 MW Palouse Junction battery storage system (G1079). The interconnection into BPA's high-voltage Federal Columbia River Transmission System would be via Franklin Public Utility District's existing infrastructure.

The electronic equipment and appurtenances would be installed inside of a yet-to-be constructed customer-owned collector station at the solar facility. Equipment would include racks, revenue metering equipment, telemeter data, AC/DC converters, communications, and other electronic equipment.

BPA would install about 500 feet of new 72-strand single-mode fiber optic cable in existing conduit between the BPA Franklin Substation's control house and an existing vault. The vault is located within the BPA right-of-way, just west of structure 21/14 of the Benton-Franklin No. 2 115 kV transmission line and about 200 feet north of the substation's northern chain link fence. BPA would also update the existing SCADA masters at Dittmer and Munro Control Centers. No ground-disturbing activities are proposed by BPA.

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 the current *DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Procedures*, 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.

Becky Hill
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Sarah T. Biegel
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: Palouse Junction Solar Facility and Battery Storage Interconnection Projects (G0689 and G1079)

Project Site Description

The solar facility's project site is located about 1 mile east of Highway 395 near the town of Connell, Washington. The site is located near an airport and among wheat fields and crop circles in a low-density population area and rural community. BPA's Franklin Substation is located adjacent to Highway 12, in northeast Pasco, Washington, and is surrounded by commercial buildings and crop circles.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The BPA archaeologist and historian reviewed the proposed action and determined, per 36 CFR 800.3(a)(1), that the undertaking is a type of activity that does not have the potential to cause effects to historic properties, assuming such historic properties were present. BPA made a No Potential to Cause Effect determination on April 1, 2026.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would not be any excavation or ground disturbance when implementing the proposed action. Therefore, geology and soils would not be impacted due to implementation of the proposed action.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The installation of electronic equipment inside the collector station would not impact vegetation. The fiber optic cable installation may temporarily damage vegetation growing near the vault. No special-status plant species were observed during a spring 2026 site visit, and no special-status plant species have been documented within a 1-mile radius of the Franklin Substation. The sandy-soils of the sparsely vegetated area near the vault include native and non-native grasses, and invasive Russian thistle tumbleweed (*Salsola tragus*). Therefore, implementation of the proposed action may have a low impact to plants.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The installation of electronic equipment inside the collector station would not impact wildlife or habitats. The fiber optic cable installation at the vault may temporarily flush birds, small rodents, and other generalist wildlife species away from the immediate area; however, their proximity to the Franklin Substation suggests that they are habituated to elevated noises and human presence. No special-status wildlife species nor unique wildlife

habitats were observed during a spring 2026 site visit, and no special-status wildlife species have been documented within a 1-mile radius of the Franklin Substation. Therefore, implementation of the proposed action may have a low impact to wildlife.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The installation of electronic equipment inside the collector station and fiber optic cable installation in an existing vault at Franklin Substation would not impact water bodies, floodplains, fish, or fish habitats because the nearest water bodies, floodplains, and streams are all located over 1 mile away. Therefore, water bodies, floodplains, and fish would not be impacted due to implementation of the proposed action.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The nearest wetland is located about 1 mile north of the Franklin Substation. The installation of electronic equipment inside the collector station and fiber optic cable installation in an existing vault at Franklin Substation would not impact the wetland. Therefore, wetlands would not be impacted due to implementation of the proposed action.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no excavation or ground-disturbing activities when implementing the proposed action. Therefore, groundwater and aquifers would not be impacted due to implementation of the proposed action.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: One Energy Development LLC, Franklin Public Utility District, and BPA own and operate the facilities where the proposed actions would be implemented. The installation of electronic equipment and fiber optic cable is consistent with existing land uses. No specially-designated areas are involved in the implementation of the proposed action. Therefore, land use and specially-designated areas would not be impacted due to implementation of the proposed action.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would occur inside of a yet-to-be constructed customer-owned and operated collector station and within existing underground conduit. Therefore, the visual quality of the area would not be impacted due to implementation of the proposed action.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions would occur during project implementation. However, there would be no substantial changes to air quality during or after construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Highway 12 near Franklin Substation produces consistent noise in the area. Project implementation may create low-level, temporary noise near the vault. However, the noise would be intermittent and would likely only last for one day. Operating noise would not increase due to the electronic equipment and fiber optic cable. Therefore, noise impacts due to the implementation of the proposed action would be negligible.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During project implementation, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Therefore, human health and safety would not be impacted due to implementation of the proposed action.

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: BPA is coordinating with One Energy Development LLC and Franklin Public Utility District. No other landowner coordination or involvement is necessary.

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