

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Tillamook Substation Line Terminal Swap Project

Project No.: P00492

Project Manager: Michael Henjum – TIPS-CSB-2

Location: Tillamook County, Oregon.

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.7 Electronic Equipment, B1.31 Installation or Relocation of Machinery and Equipment, B4.5 Additions and Modifications to Transmission Facilities, B4.7 Fiber Optic Cable, B4.9 Multiple Use of Powerline Rights-of-Way, B4.11 Electric Power Substations and Interconnection Facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow Tillamook Public Utility District (TPUD) to interconnect its new Oceanside 115 kV transmission line into BPA's Tillamook Substation. To accommodate this, BPA would relocate the line termination position of PacifiCorp's existing Sugarloaf Line from bay 9 to bay 6 and then terminate the Oceanside Line in bay 9. Additionally, BPA would install a multimode fiber optic cable through existing conduit between BPA's control house and TPUD's control house. This fiber would connect to a new fiber patch panel inside each control house and be wired to existing communication equipment within the control house.

Just outside the north side of the substation fencing, a communications conduit line would be installed within an existing power conduit corridor. A trench would be excavated approximately 2-feet-wide by 60-feet-long and 3-feet-deep within the existing utility corridor. The communications conduit would be then installed above the power conduit. The project would also install guy wire anchors for a power pole structure. The anchors would be placed in a location between an existing underground fiber optic cable and three oil containment vaults. To locate the fiber optic cable, vacuum equipment would be used to remove sediment within the previously disturbed trench. The guy wire anchors would then be installed using a mini excavator or bobcat to screw the anchors into the ground and would not require trenching.

Finally, the project would move the Keeler-Tillamook fiber line to a new underground conduit. This would involve removing the overhead fiber line segment between the substation and Keeler-Tillamook Fiber System structure 1/1. From structure 1/1, the fiber would be routed into the existing BPA vault located approximately 15 feet to the northwest of the structure. From the vault, the fiber would then be bored underground, or trenched, approximately 42 feet south into the substation yard. The fiber would then continue through the substation yard and connect to the existing control house fiber patch panel. A redundant fiber line would also be installed along the same route from the customer vault to the control house panel. The fiber within the substation yard may be run in existing conduit or be trenched and new conduit installed depending upon the condition of the extant conduit. The overall fiber route would measure approximately 1,200 feet long by 3 feet deep.

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 BPA 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.

Jessica A. Heppler
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.

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Project Site Description

The project site is located on BPA fee-owned property at BPA's Tillamook Substation near the City of Tillamook in Tillamook County, Oregon (T1S R9W SEC30). The area in and around the substation may be characterized as residential, light industrial, and open agricultural fields. Ground cover within the project site consists of regularly mowed grass species, and graveled ground surfaces in the substation yard. According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the National Wetland Inventory, there are neither wetlands in the project area nor are there hydric soils present.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: BPA initiated Section 106 consultation on April 13, 2026, with the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). BPA determined that the proposed activities would not result in any historic properties affected. On April 14, 2026, the SHPO confirmed receipt of the consultation and assigned the project SHPO Case No. 26-0386. On May 13, 2026, the 30-day response period expired. No other comments were received.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Ground-disturbing activities would include trenching within the substation property footprint both inside and outside the substation perimeter fence, installing guy-wire anchors, and location of buried infrastructure with a vacuum. Trenching and vacuum efforts would be backfilled with appropriate material depending on location once installation activities are completed, and areas outside the substation fencing are expected to revegetate with the kind of low-growing, maintained grasses already present. Additionally, depending upon vehicles and equipment used, some minor soil compaction could occur. Project activities are not expected to impact site geology.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: There are no documented occurrences of any special-status plant species, state sensitive species or plant species protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) occurring at the project site. All project actions would be in areas maintained for little or no vegetation.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: There are no documented occurrences of special-status wildlife species or suitable habitat present in the project area. Minor and temporary disturbance of common wildlife species could occur from elevated noise during construction. Because the work would be occurring in proximity to a fenced and currently operating substation yard, any wildlife present are likely used to human presence and noise.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Project area has no nearby waterbodies, is not in a floodplain, and would not affect fish species.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Project area is not within a wetland.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Project activities are unlikely to reach depths where groundwater or aquifers could be affected.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: The project would not result in changes to land use or specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Moving line landings from one substation bay to another in addition to the trenching would represent some visual alterations to the site. The trenches would be expected to revegetate after project actions are completed. Overall, project actions would result in a minor alteration to visual quality and would remain visually consistent with the overall characteristics of the current site.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: The proposed action would cause a minor and temporary increase in emissions in the local area from vehicle and equipment use. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the proposed action.

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 land. BPA has been working in coordination with TPUD and PacifiCorp.

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