

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Fiber Optic Cable Installation at Levey Substation

**Project No.:** LURR20250420

**Project Manager:** Valorie Connell, TERR-PASCO

**Location:** Franklin County, Washington

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B4.7 Fiber optic cable; B4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow Franklin Public Utility District (FPUD) to install a new vault and fiber optic cable on BPA fee-owned land at the Levey Substation. Near the intersection of Ice Harbor Road and the substation's gravel access road, FPUD would splice into an existing vault and fiber optic cable network to install new 2-inch PVC conduit and fiber optic cable. The new 400-foot-long conduit and cable would be installed in a northwest to southeast direction via trenching or directional boring, and it would parallel BPA's gravel access road. The conduit and cable would terminate at the substation's chain link fence. If trenching is used, the trench would be about 1 to 2 feet wide and about 3 feet deep. A mini-track hoe would work within about 10 to 15 feet on either side of the trench. If directional boring is used, there would be entry and exit locations with some surface soil disturbance at each end.

Near the substation's chain link fence, FPUD would install a new fiber optic cable vault. The vault would be about 2 feet by 3 feet by 3 feet in size. Between the new vault and the substation's control house (located inside the fence) an additional 20 feet of conduit and fiber optic cable would be installed by FPUD. The new fiber would connect to FPUD's enclosure mounted on the control house's external wall. Fiber optic cable would be connected to the substation's communications and monitoring systems, and an existing radio and antenna would be removed after successful installation and testing of the new fiber line.

The substation's chain link fence would not be altered during the project. Vehicles and heavy equipment would primarily be staged on existing gravel surfaces near the substation but may also travel into vegetated areas adjacent to the access road and substation fence.

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 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:

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:** Fiber Optic Cable Installation at Levey Substation

## **Project Site Description**

The project site is at BPA's Levey Substation, which is about 10 miles east of Pasco, Washington. This region of the Columbia Plateau is characterized by rolling hills, orchards, crop circles, warehouse buildings to support agriculture production, and low-density rural residences.

The substation is located between an orchard to the east and Ice Harbor Road to the north and west. South of the substation is undeveloped land managed by the Department of Defense, a railroad and land managed by the State of Washington, and transmission lines and infrastructure associated with the Ice Harbor Dam on the Snake River. An intermittent tributary stream to the Snake River is located about 950 feet west of the substation, on the opposite side of Ice Harbor Road. The Snake River and the Ice Harbor Dam are about 1,800 feet south of the Levey Substation. There are no wetlands within two miles of the project site.

## **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: On February 18, 2026, BPA initiated Section 106 consultation with the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, the Nez Perce Tribe, and the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). On the same day, DAHP concurred with BPA's Area of Potential Effect.

BPA conducted field surveys and issued a No Historic Properties Affected determination on April 21, 2026. On April 27, 2026, DAHP concurred with BPA's determination, with the stipulation of implementing a Post-Review Discovery Plan. No responses were received from the other consulting parties.

Notes:

- A Post-Review Discovery Plan, with contact information for the BPA cultural resources lead, would be supplied to the applicant. Should cultural resources be discovered during project activities, then all project work in the area must stop, and the cultural resources lead must be notified immediately.

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Conduit and fiber optic cable would be installed about 3 to 4 feet below ground level. About 250 square feet (for directional boring entry and exit points) or about 12,000 square feet (for trenching) of surface soil would be temporarily disturbed during the installation process. Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be implemented to prevent migration of sediment off-site. Therefore, impacts to geology and soils are expected to be low.

Notes:

- Implement a BPA-approved Erosion and Sediment Control Plan (ESCP) that is guided by Washington Department of Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No federally-listed, special-status plant species or habitats exist within the project area. The vegetation that may be damaged during construction activities include native and non-native grasses, Russian thistle, rabbit brush, and sagebrush. Disturbed areas would be revegetated upon project completion and no permanent impacts to vegetation are expected. Therefore, impacts to plants are expected to be low.

Notes:

- Upon project completion, the applicant is responsible for reseeding the disturbed areas with a seed mix that is regionally appropriate for the area.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No federally-listed, special-status wildlife species or habitats exist within the project area. Common wildlife species potentially using the project area (such as burrowing rodents, coyotes, and grassland/sagebrush birds), may be temporarily impacted during construction and may temporarily disperse to adjacent habitats. Some minor impacts to ground nesting or burrowing species in the immediate area may occur during the directional boring or trenching process. However, impacts to wildlife are expected to be low.

Notes:

- To reduce impacts to wildlife and ground-nesting birds potentially using the project area, limit construction activities to August 15 to March 1 (outside of the nesting season), when feasible.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No water bodies, floodplains, or special-status fish species or habitats are present within 900 feet the project area. During construction, BMPs would prevent indirect impacts to off-site water bodies, floodplains, special-status fish, or fish habitat. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies, floodplains, fish, or fish habitat.

Notes:

- Implement a BPA-approved ESCP that is guided by Washington Department of Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington.
- Maintain an oil/fuel spill kit on-site during construction to address containment, cleanup, and disposal in the event of a spill.

### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are located within 2 miles of the project area. Therefore, the proposed action would have no impacts to wetlands.

### **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No areas of shallow groundwater or aquifers are known to exist within the project area. Subsurface work would be within about 3 to 4 feet of the ground's surface. No hazardous materials beyond fuels and oils used in construction equipment would be used for the project, and spill remediation materials would be stored at the construction site to quickly contain any releases of oil or fuel. Therefore, the proposed action would have no impacts to groundwater or aquifers.

## **8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no specially-designated areas within the project area and no changes to land use are proposed. The installation of the fiber optic cable is consistent with the current land use at the substation. Therefore, the proposed action would have no impacts to land use or specially designated areas.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Upon project completion, the new fiber optic cable would be buried underground and would not be visible and the antenna removal would result in a minor visual change to the substation. The operation and maintenance of the cable would not impact visual quality. Therefore, the proposed action would have little to no impact to visual quality.

## **10. Air Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary vehicle and construction equipment emissions and fugitive dust would occur during construction. No new sources of emissions are anticipated once the project is constructed. Therefore, impacts to air quality are expected to be low.

## **11. Noise**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary vehicle and construction noise would occur during construction. Construction work hours would be limited to 8am to 6pm to reduce noise to the nearest sensitive noise receptor, which is a rural residence located about 600 feet southwest of the project area. Construction would occur over about a 1-to-2-week timespan. There would be no increase in ambient noise to the area due to operation and maintenance of the fiber optic cable installation.

Notes:

- Construction hours would be limited to 8am and 6pm to reduce the potential noise impacts to the rural residence located to the southwest.

## **12. Human Health and Safety**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Contractors would follow BPA and OSHA safety standards and would submit a safety plan for BPA's review and approval prior to commencing construction work onsite. The project would not create any new safety hazards or use materials that could threaten human health and safety. No new impacts to human health and safety are anticipated.

## **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 on BPA fee-owned property associated with the Levey Substation. Franklin PUD would be responsible for notifying the landowner of the rural residence located about 600 feet southwest of the substation, prior to construction commencing.

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