

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Steilacoom Substation Security Fence Installation

Project Manager: Christopher Ross, NWMS-1

Location: Pierce County, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.11 Fencing, B1.3 Routine Maintenance.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes installing a new section of security fencing at the Steilacoom Substation in Pierce County, Washington, to connect existing fence lines. Currently, the substation's eastern and western BPA fences intersect with residential wooden fencing along the northern boundary. However, there are gaps between BPA's existing chain link fencing and the residential wooden fencing at the northwest and northeast corners of the substation property. This residential wooden fencing does not meet BPA security standards, necessitating installation of a new section of chain link security fence to secure the site. The new security fence would be a 8-foot-tall chain link fence, approximately 165 feet in length, and would require excavation for approximately 20 concrete footings. It would be installed directly south of the existing wood fencing and would connect to the existing BPA fencing on the east and west sides of the substation property.

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.

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Aidan McCready

Environmental Protection Specialist

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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: Steilacoom Substation Security Fence Installation

Project Site Description

Steilacoom Substation is located in Township 20N, Range 2E Section 32 in Pierce County, WA. The land is BPA-owned property and consists primarily of maintained gravel substation yard, gravel access road, and some naturally recruited primarily invasive grasses and low shrubs along the northmost side of the substation. The nearest surface water is Waughop Lake, which is approximately 0.6 miles away.

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 Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), the Nisqually Indian Tribe, and the Puyallup Tribe of Indians on August 10, 2026. BPA has previously determined that the Steilacoom Substation is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places with DAHP concurrence. DAHP concurred with the Area of Potential Effect and the finding of no historic properties affected on August 10, 2026, and the Nisqually Indian Tribe concurred with the determination of no historic properties affected on September 3, 2026. No other responses were received within 30 days.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural resources or historic properties are inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA will require that 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.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Fence post footings would require excavation. Soil composition within the project area ranges from imported gravel to gravelly, sandy loam according to USDA Web Soil Survey. Excavated soil would be left on site and redistributed along the fenceline. No offsite disposal would be required. Project activities are not expected to impact site geology.

Notes:

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The fence installation would occur within the Steilacoom Substation perimeter area, which is predominantly compacted gravel. Along the fenceline of the neighboring property to the north, there is a buildup of soil where vegetation has established, including but not

limited to, reed canary grass, himalayan blackberry and scotch broom. This vegetation would be removed at the time of the fence installation. The project area is in the historic range of five Washington State listed species: true babystars (*Leptosiphon minimus*), white-top aster (*Sericocarpus rigidus*), common bluecap (*Githopsis specularioides*), Torrey's peavine (*Lathyrus torreyi*) and giant chain fern (*Woodwardia fimbriata*). However these species are all thought to be possibly expatriated, and their last confirmed sightings were all between the years of 1892 and 1908. Since then, the area has been developed and there have been no known occurrences in Steilacoom Substation. No ESA listed plant species are known to occur in the area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area does not include habitat or known sightings for any state or Federal special-status species. There would be no effect for any ESA-listed species in the area. Temporary disturbance to common wildlife species may occur due to noise and construction. Because work would be occurring in the proximity of an operational substation, any wildlife in the area is likely to be tolerant of noise and human presence.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area has no surface water features and is not in a floodplain. The nearest waterbody is Waughop Lake, to the north, approximately 0.6 miles away and is separated by multiple ditch lines and housing developments. Waughop Lake does not connect to Puget Sound and is not known to contain ESA or Washington State listed fish species.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are documented within the project area. The nearest wetland is part of Waughop lake, 0.6 miles away, and separated by multiple ditch lines and a residential neighborhood.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The depth of excavation would likely be too shallow to impact groundwater or aquifers. Standard spill prevention and remediation BMPs would be in place to prevent any potential groundwater infiltration of hazardous substances.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would occur within a BPA-owned parcel and on BPA facilities and would not result in any change to land use or specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The additional fencing would be consistent with the existing visual appearance of the substation and would result in only a minor alteration to visual quality. The wood fence along the neighboring residential property lines to the north would remain in place and would continue to obstruct views into the substation from the properties. The new BPA security fence would be installed directly to the south of the wooden fence.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

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

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours. No other temporary or ongoing noise would occur.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Workers would be required to follow all applicable state and Federal safety standards. No material would be disposed of offsite, and the project would not lead to any permanent public health or safety hazards.

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: All work would be done on BPA owned property. No landowner notification, involvement, or coordination would be required.

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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Signed: **MCCREADY**

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