

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Tacoma Sewer Line Geotechnical Testing

Project Manager: Jinyoung Lee, NWMS-PSB-2

Location: Pierce County, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B3.1 Site Characterization and environmental monitoring

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is proposing to allow its contractors to perform geotechnical, soil-contamination, and hazardous materials testing to support its sewer line replacement project at the Tacoma Substation, in Tacoma, Washington.

The geotechnical investigation would consist of:

- 4 borings, approximately 15 feet deep, along the paved driveway to the substation.
- 2 borings, approximately 10 feet deep, adjacent to the existing septic tank and drain field located near the substation parking lot.
- 1 boring, approximately 30 feet deep, at the proposed lift station location near the substation parking lot.

A truck- or track-mounted drill rig would be used, with a low-profile drilling mast. A hollow-stem auger drilling technique would be used to measure groundwater. All boring locations would be backfilled with bentonite clay, and paved surfaces would be patched with a permanent cold-patch asphalt or quick-setting concrete. Soil samples will be collected from the geotechnical drilling soils and analyzed for contamination.

Additionally, hazardous material samples would be collected from the interior of the control house to test for asbestos, lead, and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) in building materials that may be disturbed during sewer line work at the substation.

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.

**BETH
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Beth Belanger
Environmental Protection Specialist

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Concur:

**KATEY
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NEPA Compliance Officer

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Attachment: 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: Tacoma Sewer Line Geotechnical Testing

Project Site Description

The proposed project is at BPA's Tacoma Substation in the Port of Tacoma in Pierce County, Washington. The substation is in Section 1, Township 20 North, Range 3 East and Section 36, Township 21 North, Range 3 East. The surrounding area is heavily developed as an industrial zone. The Puget Sound is approximately 0.20 miles west of the project location.

The site is in the Hylebos Creek—Frontal Commencement Bay watershed. There are wetlands to the east and west of the Tacoma Substation; however no proposed project activities would occur in the wetlands. The proposed work would occur on paved roadways.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On August 11, 2026, BPA initiated Section 106 consultation with the Puyallup Tribe's Chairperson and Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO). The initiation letter included a determination of no historic properties affected. No comments were received from the consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Soil cuttings would be visually examined and field-screened for petroleum hydrocarbons. If the soil appears to be contaminated, additional soil samples may be collected for testing. Soil samples would be lab-tested for a range of potential contaminants, including gasoline-, diesel- and oil-range hydrocarbons, volatile organic compounds, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, polychlorinated biphenyls, heavy metals and total coliforms. Soil boring locations would be backfilled with bentonite clay.

Notes:

- Store soil cuttings, drilling fluid, and decontamination water onsite in a sealed container until lab-testing results have been analyzed to determine disposal requirements. Label each drum appropriately.
- Dispose of soil cuttings, drilling fluid, and decontamination water at a BPA-approved disposal facility, informed by lab-results.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The soil testing and geotechnical borings are occurring on paved roadways. There would be no impacts to Federal or state special-status plant species and habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no known occurrences of special-status species in or near the project area. The site is in an industrial area that does not contain high-quality habitat. There would be no impact on Federal or state special-status species or habitats.

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 habitat in or near the project area that would be affected by the work.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: There are no wetlands in the project area; therefore, there would be no impact on wetlands.

Notes:

- Construction vehicles and equipment must stay on paved surfaces.
- Excavated soils, drilling fluid, and decontamination water may not be disposed of on the property.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No groundwater sampling is proposed, and it is assumed that groundwater would not be encountered during sampling.

Notes:

- Store soil cuttings, drilling fluid, and decontamination water onsite in a sealed container until lab-testing results have been analyzed to determine disposal requirements. Label each drum appropriately.
- Capture any groundwater produced during testing and store in a sealed container to be lab-tested and disposed of at a BPA-approved disposal facility, informed by lab results.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The land use would not change at the project site. The project is not within, or near, any specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change to visual quality. The project area is a large electrical substation and electrical transmission right-of-way, surrounded by industrialized development.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be a slight, temporary increase in vehicle and equipment emissions during the geotechnical testing, but air quality levels would return to baseline levels when the work has been completed.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A slight, temporary increase in noise levels would occur when the geotechnical testing is done, but noise levels would return to ambient noise levels once the testing has been completed.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The contractor would follow a BPA approved Health and Safety Plan. Prior to drilling, public and private utilities would be marked in the field for avoidance.

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: Tacoma Substation and the associated ROW are located within the Commencement Bay, Nearshore/Tide Flats Superfund Site. The substation and ROW are in the Blair Waterway area of the site, where cleanup and source control actions have been completed.

The site has undergone cleanup under the Washington State Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA) and meets industrial use cleanup standards. A restrictive covenant is in place to mitigate risk to human health and safety. The proposed project activities are allowable under the terms of the restrictive covenant.

In the event suspected contamination is observed, the soils/materials would be stored in a sealed container for the BPA Environmental Lead to perform sampling and characterization of offsite disposal.

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 work is occurring on BPA fee-owned property. There are no adjacent landowners that would need to be notified or coordinated with.

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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