

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Warner Substation and Happy Camp Radio Site Alignment Project

Project No.: P06036

Project Manager: Jonathan Toobian – TIFP-CSB-2

Location: Modoc County, California

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.7 Electronic Equipment; B1.11 Fencing; B1.19 Microwave, meteorological, and radio towers; B1.24 Property transfers.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to install communications equipment and infrastructure at Warner Substation and Happy Camp Radio Site necessary for substation communication and operation.

Specifically, BPA proposes to expand the Warner Substation yard and install a new steel-lattice communications structure. The proposed tower would be 60 feet tall with one, 8-foot-diameter microwave radio dish installed at about 55 feet above ground level. The new tower would be constructed on a concrete pad that would measure about 17 feet by 17 feet by 3 feet deep and would be buried 6 inches below the grade. A new 20-foot-tall VHF whip antenna would be installed at the top of the structure. The new tower would be constructed on the southeast side of the substation, just outside of the existing perimeter fence. The substation fence would be expanded to include the new tower's location, which would include grounding for both the area under the tower and the expanded fence. Expanding the substation yard would require excavating to a depth of up to 3 feet and installing grounding, concrete footings (for the new fencing), storm outfalls, and conduit. The new extent of the substation yard would be graded flat, covered in switchyard rock, and enclosed by security fencing. Switchyard rock would extend 6 feet beyond the new perimeter fencing. A new wave guide, cables, racks, radios, electronic equipment, and appurtenances would be installed both inside and outside of the control house to connect the new dishes to interior communication equipment. A new 50-foot-tall wooden pole would be installed outside the substation entrance on the east side of the building to temporarily accommodate a 6-foot microwave dish until the new steel lattice tower can be constructed.

To construct the communication infrastructure and expand the substation, BPA proposes to acquire the entirety of the property on which the Warner Substation is located, which includes a parcel owned by Surprise Valley Electric (SVE) that includes the substation control house, and a parcel owned by the State of California. This acquisition from SVE and the State would total slightly over an acre.

BPA also proposes related work at the Happy Camp Radio Site. On a communications tower owned by Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E), BPA would install an 8-foot-wide microwave dish antenna at 60 feet above ground level, install a climbing system that meets BPA safety standards (latchways), and replace the damaged grout at the base of the tower. All cabling and

wiring associated with the new microwave antenna would be routed through existing conduit paths and openings. The installation of the microwave antenna would be conducted as to align it for communications at Warner Substation.

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)). Further, BPA is authorized to acquire any interest in real property pursuant to sections 2(c), 2(d), and 2(f) of the Bonneville Project Act, 16 U.S.C. § 832a(c), (d), and (f), and section 7 of the Federal Columbia River Transmission System Act, 16 U.S.C. § 838e.

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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Concur:

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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: Warner Substation and Happy Camp Radio Site Alignment Project

Project Site Description

The proposed project site at the BPA-owned Warner Substation, which is located in Modoc County, California (T42N R12E Section 12). Ground cover within the project site consists of sparse low-growing shrubs and herbaceous species, and graveled and rockied substation yard maintained for no vegetation. The area around the Warner Substation is characterized by Highway 299/395 to the south, working agricultural fields, light industrial, and sparse residential. According to the National Wetland Inventory data, and Natural Resource Conservation Service, no wetlands are present at the project site, nor are there hydric soils present.

The proposed project site at the Happy Camp Radio Site is located in Modoc County, California (T41N R7E Section 1). The property at the project site is managed by the US Forest Service Modoc National Forest, and the communications tower is owned by PG&E. Ground cover within the project site consists of graveled areas maintained for no vegetation and sparsely vegetated areas around the tower and communications building. The area around Happy Camp Radio Site may be characterized as open shrubland and sparse forest. According to the National Wetland Inventory data, and Natural Resource Conservation Service, no wetlands are present at the project site, nor are there hydric soils present.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: For the Warner Substation, the BPA archaeologist determined that no historic properties would be affected by the project. BPA initiated Section 106 consultation on July 1st, 2025 with the Alturas Rancheria of Pit River Indians, the Cedarville Rancheria of Northern Paiute Indians, the Fort Bidwell Community of Paiute Indians, the Klamath Tribe, the Pit River Tribe of California, the Susanville Indian Rancheria, and the California State Historic Preservation Office. BPA did not receive any responses from consulting parties.

For the Happy Camp Radio Site, all proposed project actions meet the requirements for the *Program Comment for Communications Projects on Federal Lands and Property* (March 13, 2024). Pursuant to Stipulation VI.B. "Collocation of communications antennae," no further Section 106 review and consultation is required.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Ground disturbing activities at Warner Substation would include the installation of substation grid grounding, the installation of the about 17-foot by 17-foot concrete tower base, the installation of new substation perimeter fence, installing the 50-foot-tall wooden pole, and rockied the area around the tower base with switchyard rock. Project actions would permanently impact approximately 0.02 acres by the installation of the concrete tower base, and the area around the tower to be fenced and included in the overall footprint of the substation. The area to be fenced has been previously disturbed during the initial

construction of the Warner Substation. While construction activity would occur in the paved and graveled areas in and around the substation, some soil compaction may occur depending on equipment and vehicles used. Project activities are not expected to affect geology of the site.

There are no ground disturbing activities planned at the Happy Camp Radio Site.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Ground disturbance is anticipated where the substation grounding grid expansion, fence expansion, and the pole installation would be occurring at Warner Substation. However, all ground disturbing activities would occur in areas that are graveled and maintained to prevent vegetation growth or are sparsely vegetated due to prior disturbance from substation construction. There are no ground disturbing activities planned at Happy Camp Radio Site, and no vegetation would be removed because of project activities. There are no documented occurrences of any state or USFS special-status plant species, or plant species protected under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) occurring at either project site. Therefore, the proposed project would result in no effect to protected or sensitive plant species.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Temporary disruption of normal wildlife behavior could occur from elevated noise and human presence during project implementation. However, wildlife species in both project areas that could be present are likely already habituated to human activity, including vehicle traffic and other activities associated with substation and communications site operations. There are no documented occurrences of any USFS sensitive species, state special-status wildlife species, or wildlife species protected under the federal ESA, and no such species or suitable habitat are expected to occur at the project sites. Therefore, the proposed project would result in no effect to protected wildlife species.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Both project areas have no nearby waterbodies, are not in floodplains, and would not affect fish species.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Both project action areas are not within, nor near wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Project actions in both locations would not reach depths that could impact aquifers and groundwater.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Land zoning would not change after BPA's property purchases at Warner Substation. There is no underlying special land use designation that would change with the purchase.

There would be no change in land use or specially designated areas at Happy Camp Radio Site as a result of this project.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: The construction of the radio tower and the addition of a wooden pole are expected to be an alteration to visual quality. While there are currently no other radio towers in the vicinity, there are transmission structures of similar height. The addition of a radio tower would remain consistent with the overall visual characteristics of the Warner Substation site.

The addition of lathways and a new microwave dish at the Happy Camp Radio Site are expected to be minor visual changes. Overall visual changes would remain consistent with the current site characteristics.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No.

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

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Temporary construction noise at both project action sites would occur during daylight hours. No ongoing noise increase is expected at either project site as a result of these project actions.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Project actions 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 the proposed 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: BPA would work with Surprise Valley Electric, and the State of California to secure this property. BPA would coordinate with the USFS and PG&E as needed for the work on the Happy Camp Radio Site tower.

Based on the foregoing, this proposed project does not have the potential to cause significant impacts to any environmentally sensitive resource.

Signed: **JESSICA HEPPLER**
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