

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Kerr Substation PCA and Outdoor Equipment Upgrades Project

PP&A No.: 3,628

Project Manager: Charla Burke – TEP-TPP-1

Location: Lake County, Montana

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):

B1.3 Routine Maintenance

Description of the Proposed Action: The electrical equipment at Bonneville Power Administration's Kerr Substation in Lake County, MT is aged and in need of modernization. BPA is proposing to upgrade the substation equipment and control house. The existing control house would be replaced by a Power Control Assembly (PCA) building. Three surge arrestors would be installed, and three current transformers would be relocated. Insulators, bus, a power circuit breaker, and the voltage transformers would be replaced. A new battery house for back-up power would be added, as well as additional grounding mat for new gates.

Findings: In accordance with Section 1021.410(b) 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, July 9, 1996; 61 FR 64608, Dec. 6, 1996, 76 FR 63764, Nov. 14, 2011), BPA has determined that the proposed action:

- (1) fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D (see attached Environmental Checklist);
- (2) does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; and
- (3) has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion.

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

/s/ Aaron Siemers

Aaron Siemers

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: June 8, 2018

Attachment(s):

Environmental Checklist

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Checklist

This checklist 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: Kerr Substation PCA and Outdoor Equipment Upgrades Project

Project Site Description

The Kerr Substation PCA and Outdoor Equipment Upgrades Project is located at the Kerr Substation, below the Seli's Ksanka Qlispé Dam of Flathead Lake, in Lake County, Montana. The substation is located approximately 430 feet from the southern banks of the Flathead River. It was constructed in the late 1940s, is approximately 0.8 acre, and contains a small control house and 115 kV high-voltage electrical equipment. The substation distributes electricity from the hydroelectric turbines located within Seli's Ksanka Qlispé Dam, located approximately 0.5 miles to the east, and also serves as a hub in the regional high-voltage transmission system.

The work area is located in the Flathead Valley ecoregion in western Montana, characterized by glacial, lake, and alluvial geologic deposits from the Quaternary period. The ecoregion is generally treeless, dominated by native grasses and farmlands, with climate moderated by the nearby Flathead Lake, which is the largest natural freshwater lake in the western United States. However, near the substation and Flathead River, cedar, maple, elm, and other trees are present on the north-facing slopes, near drainages, and along the river banks.

The legal description of the project site is detailed below:

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Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Explanation:

The Kerr Substation and the control house at the substation are eligible for registration in the National Register of Historic Places under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Since the substation is on Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe (CSKT) tribal lands, Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) initiated consultation with the CSKT on October 25, 2017. On January 29, 2018, the CSKT replied in a letter that removal of the control house would have no adverse effect to cultural and historic properties.

BPA archaeologists have reviewed the project scope and previous cultural surveys within the area of potential effect (APE). There are no previously recorded cultural sites within the APE. The APE both within and directly adjacent to substation's fence is within an area that has been completely modified and artificially leveled during construction. The proposed project (action) is an undertaking, but no historic properties would be affected. No further action is needed per the NHPA.

2. **Geology and Soils**



Explanation:

The project would be conducted within and immediately adjacent to an electrical substation yard. The yard was leveled and modified with cuts and engineered fills during the development of the substation. While some minor excavations are planned for the project (< 7 ft. in depth) for the new concrete footings, the excavation would have a relatively limited footprint, and would be in previously disturbed soils and fills. The project has no potential for significant impacts to geology and soils.

3. **Plants** (including federal/state special-status species)



Explanation:

No special-status, including endangered, plants are present in or within the immediate vicinity of the substation. The project would be conducted primarily within a developed electrical substation yard that is periodically sprayed to keep weeds and plants from impacting the transmission system. Spalding's Catchfly is the only endangered plant listed in Lake County. However, there is no suitable habitat for Spalding's Catchfly in the project area, and the project would have "no effect" on Spalding's Catchfly. The project has no potential for significant impacts to plants.

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



Explanation: BPA obtained an official species list from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service on May 31st, 2018. Canada lynx, grizzly bear, North American wolverine, and the yellow-billed cuckoo are listed as endangered species in Lake County, MT. However, the project would be conducted in a developed electrical substation yard, adjacent to parking lots and additional substations. There is no suitable habitat for Canada lynx, North American wolverine, grizzly bear, and the yellow-billed cuckoo, and there are no documented siting's of these endangered species within the project area. The project does not involve clearing trees, building roads, or removing any pre-existing habitat. The project would have "no effect" on endangered wildlife species. The project has no potential for significant impacts to wildlife.

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



The Flathead River is present near the project area approximately 430 feet to the north. However, the project area is relatively flat. All ground disturbance would be within the rockered substation yard, and immediately adjacent to the yard. Stormwater control BMPs would be implemented during construction to ensure that there is no release of sediment to the Flathead River associated with the construction project. The project has no potential for significant impacts to water bodies, floodplains, and fish.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation:

All the work would be conducted in the substation yard and the immediate vicinity of the substation yard. There are no wetlands present in the project area.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation:

The work would not involve new groundwater wells or ground disturbance that would impact aquifers.

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



Explanation:

The project is a maintenance project to upgrade existing electrical equipment, and would not change or alter land use. There are no specially designated areas in the project area.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation:

The proposed work would be conducted in a pre-existing developed electrical substation yard. While some minor alterations to the yard are planned, the project would not significantly alter the current landscape, or impact visual quality in any meaningful way.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation:

The project would create temporary dust and vehicle emission due to construction; however, no significant impacts would occur.

11. **Noise**



Explanation:

The project would create temporary noise due to construction; however, no significant impacts would occur.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation:

During project activity, all standard safety protocols would be followed. The project would not have significant impacts on human health or safety.

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, if necessary: 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, if necessary: 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, if necessary: 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, if necessary: N/A

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: The proposed project is located on land owned and managed by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribe (CSKT). The Bonneville Power Administration would continue to coordinated project activities with the CSKT during planning and construction.

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

Signed: /s/ Aaron Siemers
Aaron Siemers
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: June 8, 2018