

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Installation of Transmission Facilities at BPA's Quenett Creek Substation

Project No.: P03695, L0433 and LURR20190339

Project Manager: Amy Gardner – TEP-TPP-1

Location: Wasco County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.11 Electric power substations and interconnection facilities; B4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow Northern Wasco County Public Utility District (NWCPUD) to install about 1,500 linear feet of new 230kV transmission line on BPA fee-owned property in Wasco County, Oregon. The new transmission line would be installed adjacent to BPA's Quenett Creek and Chenoweth substations, and would update the transmission infrastructure to accommodate future load-growth in the region. BPA would also install new equipment and make structure modifications to allow NWCPUD to interconnect to BPA's Quenett Creek Substation.

NWCPUD would conduct geotechnical studies with a truck or track mounted drill rig in the areas where the new steel monopole transmission line structures would be installed. Each geotechnical core sample would be approximately 6-inches in diameter and 30-feet deep.

NWCPUD would install a new 230kV transmission line that would connect to two bays at the Quenett Creek Substation. About 1,500 linear feet of the total length of the transmission line would be installed on BPA fee-owned property. Four new steel monopole structures would be installed on the western side of the Quenett Creek and Chenoweth substations for the new transmission line. The foundation style for the monopoles would be dependent upon the geotechnical study results, but may be drilled pier boring with a steel reinforced concrete foundation, a micro-pile, or micro-tensioned rock anchors.

To create adequate space for the new transmission line, BPA would remove two wooden H-frame structures (structures 1/1 and 1/3 of the Chenoweth-Goldendale No. 1 transmission line), and NWCPUD would remove one of their single wood pole structures. Additionally, BPA would need to reinforce structure 1/2 of the Chenoweth-Goldendale No. 1 transmission line. A new gravel access road, about 750 linear feet long by 12 feet wide, would be constructed to gain better equipment access to the area where structure 1/3 is located.

NWCPUD would install about 130 linear feet of new underground distribution segments and fiber optic cable through conduit that would connect Quenett Creek substation to one of the new structures.

BPA would install new revenue metering at Quenett Creek Substation, and install new racks and update the remedial action schemes (RAS) at both Quenett Creek and Chenoweth substations.

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, Jul. 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/ Becky Hill

Becky Hill
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Carol Leiter

Carol Leiter
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange November 15, 2021

Katey C. Grange Date
NEPA Compliance Officer

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: Installation of Transmission Facilities at BPA's Quenett Creek Substation

Project Site Description

The project site is located in the area immediately surrounding BPA's Quenett Creek and Chenoweth substations, located in The Dalles, Oregon. The Quenett Creek Substation is located about 150 feet north of the Chenoweth Substation, and both substations are generally located about 750 feet south of Taylor Lake, about 1,000 feet west of the Columbia River, and about 2,000 feet east of Interstate 84. A 6-acre emergent wetland is located east of Interstate 84 and west of the substations. River Trail Way, a paved public road, is located about 100 feet south of the Chenoweth Substation, and Chenoweth Creek is located an additional 300 feet south of River Trail Way. As a tributary to the Columbia River, Chenoweth Creek is habitat for coho, coastal cutthroat trout, redband trout, and steelhead. No project work is proposed in the waterways or wetland. The area near the substations is highly developed with industrial infrastructure, warehouses, and data center buildings.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The BPA archaeologist initiated Section 106 consultation on August 6, 2020 with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (CTWSRO), Nez Perce Tribes, Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

On August 8, 2020, the CTUIR concurred with the delineation of the Area of Potential Effect (APE), and requested a monitor for all construction activities, including the geotechnical work. A follow-up meeting was held between BPA and the CTUIR cultural resources staff on August 10th to further discuss the project, APE and the request for monitoring. On August 17, 2020, BPA and the CTWSRO cultural resources staff held a meeting to discuss the project. Written correspondence from the CTWSRO was received on the same day.

On June 2, 2021, the BPA archaeologist determined that implementation of the proposed undertaking, would result in no adverse effect to historic properties, with the stipulation that a cultural resource monitor be present during all construction activities located within the APE and the areas would be flagged for avoidance.

Notes:

- NWCPUD to retain the services of CTUIR monitors and BPA would work in conjunction with NWCPUD to ensure that a monitor is present during construction activities.
- An Inadvertent Discovery Plan with contact information for the BPA cultural resources lead would be supplied to the construction contractor prior to commencing construction work.

Should any cultural resources be discovered during project activities, then all project work must stop in the area, and the cultural resources lead should be notified immediately.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Excavation and movement of soils would occur during structure installation and geotech borings. A site-specific Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan has been developed to ensure that erosion and sedimentation from excavated soils do not enter waterways. Excess excavated soils that cannot be reused onsite would be disposed of at a BPA-approved disposal location. Standard construction erosion and sedimentation control plan best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented.

Notes:

- Control dust during construction, using water trucks or other appropriate methods, as needed.
- Disturbed areas would be re-seeded after construction activities are complete at the appropriate time period for germination with a locally-adapted, native seed mix approved by BPA environmental staff.
- A Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasures (SPCC) Plan would be implemented in accordance with Federal, state, and local requirements that addresses fuel and chemical storage, spill containment and cleanup, construction contractor training, and proper spilled material disposal activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no documented occurrences of any state-listed, special-status, or Federally-listed plant species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in the project area; therefore, the proposed project would not have an effect on state-listed, special-status, or Federally-listed ESA plant species. Project work would primarily occur in highly developed graveled areas, but also on some rock outcrop areas, where vegetation as a whole is relatively sparse. Vegetation that would be impacted by project activities includes native and non-native grasses, and short statured shrubs growing on the exposed rock outcrops.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no documented occurrences of any state-listed, special-status, or Federally-listed wildlife species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in the project area; therefore, the proposed project would not have an effect on state-listed, special-status, or Federally-listed ESA wildlife species. Wildlife may temporarily relocate during project construction activities, but would likely return to the area after construction is completion because wildlife using the project area would likely already be acclimated to human disturbances due the site's high frequency usage and vehicle traffic.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area does not contain any water bodies, floodplains, or surface connectivity to fish streams. There would be no impacts to these resources due to the distance of the work areas from the waterbodies and the implementation of erosion control BMPs. No work in or near the Columbia River or Chenoweth Creek or its floodplain is proposed. Therefore, no impacts to fish would occur.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project area does not contain any wetlands, therefore, there would be no impacts to wetland resources as a result of this project. A delineated emergent wetland, about 6 acres in size, is located west of the project area. At its closest, the wetland boundary is about 70 feet away from the work.

Notes:

- Flag or stake wetland boundaries in the vicinity of construction areas and avoid these areas during construction.
- Standard construction erosion and sedimentation control plan BMPs would be implemented.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No new wells or use of groundwater is proposed. Spill prevention measures would be utilized during construction activities. The project would not provide a pathway for groundwater contamination.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no changes to land use or impacts to specially-designated areas as a result of this project.

The project area is located in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area; however, it is designated as GMA Urban Area that is exempt from the scenic area land-use conditions.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: New structures would be visually consistent with existing uses in the area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Small amount of dust and vehicle emissions due to temporary construction activities.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some temporary construction noise would occur.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impact to human health and safety is 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: Project activities would occur on BPA fee-owned property. BPA has been in close coordination with Northern Wasco County Public Utility District as the project design developed.

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

Signed: /s/ Becky Hill

Becky Hill, ECT-4
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC

November 15, 2021

Date