

United States Government

Department of Energy  
Bonneville Power Administration

# memorandum

DATE: April 4, 2011

REPLY TO  
ATTN OF: KEC-4

SUBJECT: Environmental Clearance Memorandum

to: David Tripp – TEP-CSB-1

**Proposed Action:** Albion Butte Radio Station Communication Upgrade

**Budget Information:** Work Order # 00253466 Task 03

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B1.7 “Acquisition, installation, operation, and removal of communication systems...”

**Location:** Cassia County, Idaho – Section 19, Township 11 South, Range 26 East of the Nibbs Creek Quadrangle

**Proposed by:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)

**Description of the Proposed Action:** BPA proposes to upgrade the communication building and equipment at BPA’s Albion Butte Radio Station located in Cassia County, ID. This project is part of an overarching initiative to digitalize BPA’s communication system in order to improve transmission efficiency and reliability. The proposed installations include a new 240-square foot communication building, two 1,500-gallon propane tanks, and micro-wave radio antennas that would be installed onto an existing 80-foot radio tower. Additional communication equipment would be installed within the new communication building and the existing communication building would remain to house the proposed emergency generator. The project would also include the removal of the 3,000-gallon propane tank at the site.

All ground disturbing activities would be limited to property that BPA currently leases from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and no new access roads would be required. BPA and BLM have reviewed the proposed action and all land use agreement terms, conditions, and stipulations would be coordinated prior to project implementation.

**Findings:** BPA has determined that the proposed action complies with Section 1021.410 and Appendix B of Subpart D 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). The proposed action does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal. The proposal is not connected [40 C.F.R. 1508.25(a)(1)] to other actions with potentially significant impacts, is not related to other proposed actions with cumulatively significant impacts [40 C.F.R. 1508.25(a)(2)], and is not precluded by 40 C.F.R. 1506.1 or 10 C.F.R. 1021.211. Moreover, the proposed action would not (i) threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, (ii) require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities, (iii) disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act-excluded petroleum and natural gas products that pre-exist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases, or (iv) adversely affect environmentally sensitive resources.

Based on a site survey and a detailed cultural resource report produced by a BPA in-house archaeologist covering the proposed area of potential effect, it was determined that no adverse impacts to cultural resources would occur by this project. The cultural resource report and a summary letter were sent on November 22, 2010 to the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation, the Shoshone-Paiute of the Duck Valley Indian Reservation, and the Te-Moak of Western Shoshone Indians of Nevada. In addition, the cultural resource report and summary letter was sent to the BLM Burley Field Office on November 29, 2010. A concurrence letter dated January 14, 2011 was subsequently received regarding this cultural resource report from the Idaho SHPO. Several emails were received from the BLM Burley Field Office archeologist, including a final Environmental Clearance Memorandum dated March 24, 2011. No reply was received from the tribes.

The project area is located on BLM managed land and possible impacts to threatened or endangered species were review by BLM specialists. As stated in the BLM's biological evaluation dated February 2, 2011, a BLM botanist noted the proposed construction activities would occur within a previously disturbed location and a sensitive plant clearance was previously completed at this site. No new information indicates that any sensitive plant species exist at this site. A sensitive animal clearance report provided by the BLM indicated the proposed action area may provide seasonal habitat for the Greater sage-grouse. The Greater sage-grouse is listed as a Candidate species under the Endangered Species Act and is also protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. It was determined, however, this project would avoid causing harm, disturbance or mortality to any sensitive animal species if the Migratory Bird Treaty Act stipulation is followed, as outlined within the provisions below.

The project area is absent of water features and there would be no effect to floodplains or wetlands.

Based on the provisions identified on the attachment below this proposed action meets the requirements for the categorical exclusion referenced above. We therefore determine that the proposed action may be categorically excluded from further NEPA review and documentation.

/s/ Michael B. Henjum

Michael B. Henjum

Contract Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katherine S. Pierce

Katherine S. Pierce

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: April 4, 2011

Attachments:

Provisions

Environmental Checklist for Categorical Exclusions

## **Provisions**

This categorical exclusion will meet the following provisions:

### **Migratory Bird Treat Act Stipulation:**

1. In compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, project activities are not to take place during the migratory bird nesting season from March 1 through July 31, or until occupied nests are no longer active. If construction activities must take place during the migratory bird nesting season an exception request must be submitted to the BLM Authorized Officer in writing requesting a variance to the stipulation at least two weeks prior to construction. Upon receiving this request an onsite evaluation must be completed by the BLM resource specialist to determine if implementation of project activities will avoid causing harm to federally protected migratory birds.

### **Cultural Resources:**

2. Should archaeological materials be unexpectedly encountered during project activities, the following actions should be taken:
  - Stop work and immediately notify the COTR (if applicable) and a qualified archaeologist. In addition, all concerned Tribes and appropriate federal, state, and local agencies should be notified.
  - Implement reasonable measures to protect the discovery site, including any appropriate stabilization or covering.
  - Take reasonable steps to restrict access to the site of discovery.
  - Take reasonable steps to ensure the confidentiality of the discovery site.

### **Vegetation Protection and Noxious Weeds:**

3. Restrict construction activities to the area needed to work effectively. Construction crews will be instructed to restrict vehicles to designated areas and existing roads as much as possible.
4. Designated areas will be used to store equipment and supplies. The contractor will follow applicable state and federal regulations to protect plant communities.
5. After construction, disturbed areas not needed for ongoing access or maintenance will be promptly reseeded with native species where possible.
6. Seed mix for revegetation will contain a mixture of the common native bunchgrasses and dryland species present in the project area.
7. Do not spread noxious weed seeds:
  - Certify in writing that all vehicles, equipment, and machinery are free of all weeds including seeds before moving the equipment into the construction area. The COTR or site manager will inspect vehicles prior to bringing them on site.
  - When an area contaminated by weeds is encountered on, or off of, the construction site, use caution to prevent the spreading of weeds to other areas. This may include cleaning the equipment with high-pressure water prior to moving from one work site to another, or installing wheel washes. Notify the COTR or site manager as to the location of the noxious weeds.
8. Use only weed-free materials, or inert materials for mulching and for erosion control.

**Erosion Control and Land Use:**

9. Require dust abatement on road and construction site, if necessary.
10. Appropriate erosion and sediment control best management practices will be utilized for the protection of water resources.
11. Provide a schedule of construction activities to all landowners/agencies along the corridor that could be affected by construction.
12. Plan and schedule construction activities, when practical, to minimize temporary disturbance, displacement of crops, and interference with farming activities.
13. Keep gates in as found condition (opened or closed). Coordinate construction sequence with landowner so that livestock may be moved if necessary.

**Public Health and Safety:**

14. Limit construction to daytime hours for noise abatement.
15. No equipment with un-muffled exhaust is allowed. Fit all equipment with sound-control devices that are as effective as the original equipment.
16. Should contaminated media be unexpectedly encountered during construction of the project, stop work and notify the COTR. Contaminated media include materials that are potentially harmful to the environment or human health and safety. Work will proceed only after measures approved by the state and local regulatory agencies are put in place to prevent the spread of contaminated materials and protect the health and safety of workers.
17. Equip vehicles with fire suppression equipment, including a shovel, fire extinguisher, and bladder or water supply.
18. Equip construction vehicles with spill containment kits able to respond to construction related spills.

**Other:**

19. Follow all terms, conditions, and stipulations outlined in Attachment 2 of the BLM Categorical Exclusion Review and Approval memorandum.

## Environmental Checklist for Categorical Exclusions

Name of Proposed Project: Albion Butte Radio Station Upgrade Project

Work Order #: 253466

This project has been found to not adversely affect the following environmentally sensitive resources, laws, and regulations:

| Environmental Resources  | No Adverse Effect                   | No Adverse Effect With Conditions   |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Cultural Resources  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| 2. T & E Species, or their habitat(s)<br>To avoid causing harm to migratory birds, all construction activities that occur during the migratory bird nesting season (i.e. March 1 through July 31) require prior approval from the BLM Authorized Officer. Pre-construction notification must be submitted to the BLM Authorized Officer in writing at least two weeks prior to construction. An onsite evaluation would subsequently be completed by the BLM resource specialist to determine if implementation of the project activities would avoid causing harm to migratory birds. | <input type="checkbox"/>            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Floodplains or wetlands   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| 4. Areas of special designation  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| 5. Health & safety   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| 6. Prime agricultural lands  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| 7. Special sources of water  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| 8. Consistency with state and local laws and regulations   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| 9. Pollution control at Federal facilities   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| 10. Other  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>            |

**Note: Supporting documentation is in the Project file.**

Signed: /s/ Michael Henjum

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