Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: Disconnect Switch Stand Grounding Upgrades – Spokane District

Project Manager: Scott Nosal

Location: Boundary and Bonner counties, Idaho and Spokane County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to upgrade grounding at several disconnect switch stand locations located in the Spokane District. Grounding upgrades are necessary to increase employee safety when manually operating the disconnect switches.

Project details are listed below:

1. *Libby-Bonners Ferry B-417 disconnect switch stand grounding upgrade*
   This project involves wood pole replacement at structure 56/2, upgrading adjacent disconnect switch B-417 and installing additional counterpoise and ground rods along the right of way to provide enhanced grounding at the switch stand platform. A single run of counterpoise will be buried in a 60 foot long, 18 inch deep trench that will start at the switch stand platform. Ground rods will be installed at 20-foot intervals along the length of the counterpoise to the desired depth ranging from 10 to 40 feet depending on the ground rod location. The counterpoise will then be connected to the switch stand leg completing the grounding upgrade.
2. *Albeni Falls-Sand Creek and Priest River Tap disconnect switch stand grounding upgrade*
   This project involves installing grounding wells to provide enhanced grounding at disconnect switch B-138 and B-140 (Albeni Falls-Sand Creek structures 7/8 and 7/10) and disconnect switch B-142 (Priest River Tap structure 1/2). Within close proximity to each disconnect switch platform, a 6 inch diameter grounding well will be installed. The well head will be placed 4 feet below grade. The final depth of each well will be determined by soil resistivity measurements taken at 20 foot intervals during drilling of the wells. Once measurements are less than 30 ohms, drilling will stop. Conductor buried 3 feet below grade will connect the switch stand platforms to the adjacent grounding wells completing the grounding upgrade. The well casing will be backfilled with a mixture of bentonite and gypsum and any trenching required will be backfilled with the excavated soils.

3. *Trentwood-Valley Way disconnect switch stand grounding upgrade*
   This project involves installing a 6 inch diameter grounding well within 50 feet of disconnect switch B-1808 located adjacent to structure 1/10. The well head will be placed 4 feet below grade. The final depth of the well will be determined by soil resistivity measurements taken at 20 foot intervals during drilling of the well. Once measurements are less than 30 ohms, drilling will stop. Two conductors will be sleeved in conduit buried 3 feet deep and run from the grounding well to the disconnect switch platform located at structure 1/10. The conductors will attach to a plate on the disconnect switch platform. The well casing will be backfilled with a

mixture of bentonite and gypsum. In addition, two runs of conductor placed in conduit buried a minimum of 24 inches below grade will connect both disconnect switch platforms located at structure 1/10 and structure 1/9, completing the equipment grounding upgrade. Any trenching required for conduit placement will be backfilled with the excavated soils.

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/ Philip Smith for
Michael A. Rosales
Physical Scientist - Environment

Concur:

/s/ Stacy Mason Date: *February 6, 2015*
Stacy Mason
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: Disconnect Switch Stand Grounding Upgrades – Spokane District

Project Site Description

The Libby-Bonners Ferry project and the Albeni Falls-Sand Creek/Priest River Tap project are located in rural, forested areas. The Trentwood-Valley Way project is located in a highly developed commercial and residential land use area. All three projects are located within existing transmission line right of way.

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**	☑	☐
Explanation: Libby-Bonners Ferry project: the ID SHPO concurred with No Adverse Effect determination on December 17, 2014. Kalispell Tribe, Kootenai Tribe and Salish-Kotenai Tribe consulted – no response. Albeni Falls-Sand Creek/Priest River Tap and the Trentwood-Valley Way projects: Both projects were reviewed by BPA archaeologist and a determination was made that cultural surveys were not required based on previous transmission line cultural surveys.		
2. **Geology and Soils**	☑	☐
Explanation: Standard construction erosion control measures will be installed as necessary. Disturbed areas will be reseeded.		
3. **Plants** (including federal/state special-status species)	☑	☐
Explanation: No federal/special status plants present. Disturbed areas will be reseeded.		
4. **Wildlife** (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	☑	☐
Explanation: No federal/state special status species present. Minimal disturbance to any existing low growing plant species present. Disturb areas will be reseeded to provide forage and cover.		

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

Explanation:

Although surface water is located within ½ mile of the Trentwood-Valley Way and the Albeni Falls-Sand Creek/Priest River Tap projects, construction activities will not impact any surface water resource as erosion control measures will be utilized during project activities.

6.	**Wetlands**	☑	☐

Explanation:

No wetlands present.

7.	**Groundwater and Aquifers**	☑	☐

Explanation:

No use of groundwater proposed. Any grounding rods and/or grounding well construction will be performed by a State licensed well driller following all applicable State standards for well construction.

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

Explanation:

No change in land use. No specially designated areas.

9.	**Visual Quality**	☑	☐

Explanation:

No effect as grounding upgrades are below ground. Existing ground contours will not be altered.

10.	**Air Quality**	☑	☐

Explanation:

Small amount of dust and vehicle emission from construction activity.

11.	**Noise**	☑	☐

Explanation:

Temporary construction noise during daylight hours. Operational noise will not change.

12.	**Human Health and Safety**	☑	☐

Explanation:

Switch stand grounding upgrades will provide an increased level of electrical safety to those operating the disconnect switches.

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:

☑ 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:

☑ 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:

☑ 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:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: BPA Realty will make the proper landowner notifications for each project.

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

Signed: */s/ Philip Smith for* Date: *February 6, 2015*
Michael A. Rosales, KEPR-Bell-1
Physical Scientist - Environment