

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Taft Substation retaining wall and stormwater maintenance project

**Project No. (if applicable):** 2,982

**Project Manager:** Janice Grounds, TEP-CSB-2

**Location:** Mineral County, Montana

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B1.3 Routine maintenance, B1.6 Tanks and equipment to control runoff and spills

## **Description of the Proposed Action:**

BPA proposes to stabilize and repair the north and south retaining walls at Taft Substation, concurrent with a required stormwater system upgrade that includes two new underground oil containment vaults. The site receives significant snow loads and freeze-thaw cycles that have contributed to the wall failure over time. Maintenance work relating to the proposed action includes replacing the perimeter security fence, re-paving asphalt along the top of the north wall, replacing some sections of guard rail with jersey barriers, and replacing the heated entrance approach concrete slab.

The north wall project work includes drilling and installation of 70 ground anchors. South wall work includes removing the upper portion of the concrete bin and gravel wall, followed by clearing and excavating the uphill slope to 2:1 cut over an area of approximately 1.0-acre. Soil excavated on the cut slope will be spread and stabilized on site in an area to the east of the Substation yard. Erosion and sediment controls and best management practices (BMPs) will be implemented. Following construction, all disturbed areas will be seeded and stabilized.

New oil containment vault systems will be added to the two Substation yard outfalls, on the northeast and southeast corners of yard. The objective of this project is to bring Taft Substation into compliance with the Clean Water Act by installing sufficient secondary containment capacity for the four onsite reactors. Each reactor contains 6,303 gallons of insulating oil. In the event of a catastrophic release, there is not currently a mechanism to contain all of the oil from being discharged offsite into the adjacent waterways. Installing a coalescing plate separator vault and a manual shut-off valve prior to each of the two outfalls would ensure necessary spill containment. Following construction, BPA would also perform any access road repairs to the road to Taft Substation, which may include rocking, blading, or re-grading on the existing road prism.

The project work areas are on the existing BPA Substation easement and U.S. Forest Service property within the Lolo National Forest. The proposed work is necessary to stabilize the failing retaining walls surrounding the Taft Substation yard and to upgrade the existing stormwater system to adequately manage stormwater and avoid runoff or spills. BPA is planning to complete the project in summer 2015.

**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/ Makary Hutson

Makary A. Hutson  
Biologist/Environmental Scientist

Concur:

/s/ Katherine S. Pierce

Katherine S. Pierce  
NEPA Compliance Officer

*Date: March 11, 2015*

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.

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### Project Site Description

The site topography is flat to moderately-sloped, and much of the work will be in existing, cleared ROW or within the Taft Sub footprint. A younger stand of non-marketable timber is on the uphill slope and will be cleared before grading. There are existing gravel access roads to the work areas.

### Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. <b>Historic and Cultural Resources</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> A survey and Section 106 consultation was completed for the entire APE. No resources were identified in the vicinity of the proposed work areas. Montana SHPO concurrence received on 2/2/2015.		
2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> All work sites must be stabilized. Excess material should be contoured to match surrounding terrain, track-walked, seeded and mulched.		
3. <b>Plants</b> (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No ESA- or special status plants are known to exist, nor were any identified during site reviews or informal consultation with USFS and USFWS resource staff.		
4. <b>Wildlife</b> (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No ESA- or special status wildlife is known to exist, nor were any identified during site reviews or informal consultation with USFS and USFWS resource staff.		
5. <b>Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish</b> (including federal/state special-status species and ESUs)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No ESA- or special status aquatic species are known to exist, nor were any identified during site reviews or informal consultation with USFS and USFWS resource staff. There are two perennial streams in the vicinity of the Project area however, both of which may have resident fish species. Construction BMPs for erosion and sediment control must be properly installed and maintained.		
6. <b>Wetlands</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> All potential wetland areas within the vicinity of the work areas will be avoided.		
7. <b>Groundwater and Aquifers</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> The project work is primarily on the surface and not expected to impact groundwater.		

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

Explanation: Proposed action in existing facilities and will not impact surrounding land use.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: Proposed action at existing facilities will not alter or effect visual quality.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: Any fugitive dust or vehicle emissions generated during project implementation will be temporary and negligible.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: Construction noise will be temporary and localized.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: Proposed action at existing facilities will not impact 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.

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

- 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.

- 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.

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### **Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Description: Taft Sub is located in the Lolo National Forest, and BPA staff has coordinated throughout project planning with USFS staff to secure all necessary rights, permits, and approvals.

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

Signed: /s/ Makary Hutson  
Makary A. Hutson, KEPR-4  
Biological Scientist

Date: March 11, 2015