

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Rebuilding a substation tie line

Project Manager: Amanda Williams, TEP-TPP-1

Location: Kerr Substation, Lake County, Montana

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B 4.13 Upgrading and rebuilding existing powerlines

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to rebuild the 400-foot-long Kerr Tie Line that connects BPA's Kerr Substation to Mission Valley Power's (MVP's) Kerr Substation, and ultimately NorthWestern Energy's (NWE's) Kerr Substation, which serves as the interconnection point for the 200 megawatts of power generated at Kerr Dam. The Kerr Substation is located on tribally-owned land within the Flathead Indian Reservation. This rebuild is necessary to alleviate a "bottleneck" that has resulted from recently downgrading the tie line's thermal rating from 100° Celsius (C) to 50°C. The downgrading is due to substandard compression fittings attaching the conductors to the three wood pole structures in the tie line. Typically, some of the Kerr Dam power flows through the Kerr Tie Line to BPA's substation. However, due to the decreased thermal rating, the transmission system has been operated to re-direct power flow over NWE's transmission lines. Under peak load conditions NWE may be forced to curtail power generation at Kerr Dam to avoid further transmission system overloads. Rebuilding the tie line would require replacing two of the three existing 3-pole wood structures (Structures 1/2 and 1/3) with five 2-pole wood structures. The tie line will remain in its current alignment; however, the three additional structures are necessary to reconfigure the tie in points with the MVP and NEW substations. The proposed rebuild would involve the following actions:

- Removal and replacement of two of the three wood-pole transmission line structures (including wood poles, cross arms, jumpers, insulators, dampers, anchors, and guy wires)
- Replacement of existing conductors (electric wires)
- Replacement of overhead ground wire and counterpoise
- Establishment of temporary equipment and material staging areas, and tensioning sites (for pulling and tightening conductors)
- Repair of the existing lawn where disturbed by construction activities

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/ Justin Moffett

Justin Moffett

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katherine S. Pierce

Katherine S. Pierce

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: July 30, 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.

Proposed Action: Kerr Tie Line Rebuild

Project Site Description

The project site is located immediately outside the fenced and rocked substation yard at Kerr Substation. The area where Structures 1/2 and 1/3 would be replaced consists of a lawn which is part of the landscaped exterior of the Kerr Substation.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

| Environmental Resource Impacts | No Potential for Significance | No Potential for Significance, with Conditions |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|
| <p>1. Historic and Cultural Resources</p> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <p><u>Explanation:</u> BPA received a cultural clearance from the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) on July 24, 2015. The THPO recommends that a tribal cultural monitor be onsite during construction activities. Furthermore, in the event any archaeological material is encountered during project activities, BPA will take the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stop work in the vicinity and immediately notify the BPA environmental lead, a BPA archaeologist, appropriate BPA project staff, interested Tribes, DAHP, and the appropriate county, state, and federal agencies. Implement reasonable measures to protect the discovery site, including any appropriate stabilization or covering. Take reasonable steps to ensure the confidentiality of the discovery site, including restricting access. | | |
| <p>2. Geology and Soils</p> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <p><u>Explanation:</u> Erosion and sediment controls would be employed as needed to control run-off and prevent off-site transport of sediment. Excess soil would be disposed of in accordance with federal, state, and tribal laws.</p> | | |
| <p>3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)</p> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <p><u>Explanation:</u> All work in previously disturbed and landscaped areas; no sensitive plants present.</p> | | |
| <p>4. Wildlife (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)</p> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <p><u>Explanation:</u> All work in previously disturbed and landscaped areas; no special status species or suitable habitat present.</p> | | |

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

Explanation:

No in-water work proposed for this project. Erosion and sediment controls would be employed as needed to control run-off and prevent off-site transport of sediment. Excess soil would be disposed of in accordance with federal, state, and tribal laws.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation:

None present.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation:

The proposed work is in an upland area; maximum depth of disturbance would be about 10 feet below ground surface.

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

Explanation:

Proposed project would not change existing land use

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation:

Modifications to the tie line configuration would not be noticeably different from existing conditions.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation:

Any fugitive dust or similar during project implementation is expected to be temporary and minimal.

11. **Noise**

Explanation:

Construction noise would be temporary and localized. No residences or other noise-sensitive landuses within 1 mile of project.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation:

Project activities 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.

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:
Not applicable.

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

Signed: /s/ Justin Moffett

Date: July 30, 2015