

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Radio Upgrades at Franklin, Nine Mile, and Walla Walla Substations

Project Manager: V. Majors, TEP-CSB-2

Location: Franklin and Walla Walla Counties, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.19 Microwave, meteorological, and radio towers

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to upgrade the existing radio equipment and facilities at BPA's Franklin Substation, located in Franklin County, Washington, and NextEra's Nine Mile Substation and BPA's Walla Walla Substation, located in Walla Walla County, Washington. The upgrades are needed because the communication equipment for this radio path has reached the end of its useful life.

At Nine Mile Substation, the existing radio would be retired and replaced with a new radio on the existing tower. BPA would also construct a new, 12-foot by 22-foot communication building at the site. BPA currently houses its radio equipment in the existing NextEra control house at Nine Mile Substation. Space in the control house has become extremely limited, necessitating an additional building for BPA's equipment. To install the new communication building, workers would excavate the rock and soil within the building area and remove the ground mat as necessary. Workers would then install the new building and complete the backfilling and grading around the building and install a sidewalk and bollards. The new communication building would be electronically connected to the existing control house via the installation of about 60 feet of copper and fiber cables. The cables would be installed in new conduit in an approximately 1.5-foot-deep by 0.5-foot-wide trench.

To provide room for the new building and associated facilities, the existing substation yard would be expanded northwestward by approximately 5 feet. Clean fill material, new grounding mat, and switchyard rock would be installed in the expansion area. The existing fence would be removed and a 7-foot-high fabric fence with barbed top would be installed.

BPA would also acquire a lease and access road easement from the underlying land owner to provide permanent access to the site. One of two potential staging areas would be used to store materials, equipment, and vehicles during construction. The staging areas would be located directly adjacent to the access road and the yard expansion area.

All work at Walla Walla Substation would take place inside existing facilities. No ground disturbance or building modifications would occur.

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/ Katey Grange
Katey Grange
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason
Stacy L. Mason
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: December 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.

Proposed Action: Radio Upgrades at Franklin, Nine Mile, and Walla Walla Substations

Project Site Description

Work at Franklin and Walla Walla Substations would occur within existing substation facility footprints. Nine Mile Substation and the associated access road and staging areas generally contain shrub and shrub-steppe vegetation. The Nine Mile Substation project area contains an elevation between 400 and 810 feet msl. Based on review of NWIs, soil layers, topographic mapping, and aerial mapping, no wetlands or waterbodies are present within the project disturbance area.

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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Cultural consultation was initiated on August 31, 2015. A cultural resources survey report and a determination of no historic properties affected were sent to the Washington State DAHP and consulting tribes on October 16, 2015. DAHP concurred with the determination on Oct 19, 2015. No response from consulting tribes was received.		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Erosion control measures would be installed prior to ground disturbance. Clean fill and rock would be exported to the site as needed and any excess soil or rock remaining after site preparation would be removed.		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No special status plant species are present. About 1,300 square feet (0.03 acre) of vegetation would be permanently converted from shrub/grass vegetation to developed facilities that would not contain vegetative cover.		
4. Wildlife (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No special-status species are present. Local wildlife may experience temporary disturbance associated with elevated noise and human presence during construction activities.		
5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including federal/state special-status species and ESUs)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No waterbodies, floodplains, or fish are present.		

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| 6. Wetlands | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> No wetlands are present. | | |
| 7. Groundwater and Aquifers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> No new wells or use of ground water is proposed. Spill prevention measures would be present on site. | | |
| 8. Land Use and Specially Designated Areas | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> Work would occur on lands under private ownership. The project area is not subject to any special land use designations. | | |
| 9. Visual Quality | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> The new building and yard expansion would be consistent with the appearance of the existing infrastructure. | | |
| 10. Air Quality | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> Temporary dust and vehicle emissions would be generated during construction. | | |
| 11. Noise | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> Temporary construction noise would be generated during daylight hours. There are no noise sensitive areas within close proximity to work areas. | | |
| 12. Human Health and Safety | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Explanation:</u> No known soil contamination or hazardous conditions. | | |

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 has coordinated with the underlying landowner to secure access road easement rights and NextEra/Florida Power and Light regarding the expansion of the Nine Mile Substation.

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

Signed: /s/ Katey Grange

Katey Grange

Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: December 11, 2015