

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Kitts Corner Wireless Communication Facility

Project Manager: Jonathan Toobian, TEP-TPP-1

Location: King County, WA

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 allow Verizon Wireless to collocate a wireless communication facility on tower 4/2 of the Tacoma-Covington No. 3&4 transmission line. The co-location would consist of six, 8-foot tall antennas on the south and east corners of the tower that would be centered 93 feet above ground level; above-ground wireless equipment cabinetry inside the tower's footprint mounted on a 13-foot X 15-foot concrete pad, which would be surrounded with a 6-foot-tall fence (also inside the tower footprint); cabling routed between antennae and cabinetry along the tower frame; and ice bridges would be installed to protect the horizontal cable run.

There would be two supporting elements installed to provide power to the facility at the tower: a below-ground power line conduit at a depth of three feet running about 200 feet through the transmission right-of-way (ROW), and a transformer box at ground level at the western end of the project area (on vegetated area of ROW near 12th Ave SW, Federal Way, WA). About 100 cubic yards of soil would be disturbed and it is expected that about 50 cubic yards would require disposal off-site at a BPA-approved facility. At-ground leases for the facility elements and access are being negotiated by Verizon Wireless and the city of Federal Way, WA (the landowner).

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/ Michael J. O'Connell
Michael J. O'Connell
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel
Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: March 31, 2016

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: Kitts Corner Wireless Communication Facility

Project Site Description

The site is located in suburban Tacoma, WA in the municipality of Federal Way. There is a paved public multi-use path through the Tacoma-Covington No 3&4 transmission line right-of-way (ROW), with a school and housing bounding the ROW. Wetlands are present at approximately 0.4 miles from the site, and the surrounding vegetation is a mix of grasses, forbs, and brush. Active vegetation maintenance includes the frequent mowing of a wide strip for the public path, and the less frequent hand- and machine-cutting of pest and tall-growing species throughout the ROW. BPA personnel routinely need access to the tower for line maintenance responsibilities.

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"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> BPA cultural resource personnel performed a pedestrian survey of the project area and reported the findings, and a determination of 'no potential to affect' historic properties, to the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). DAHP concurred on February 22, 2016. Of the four tribes consulted, the Nisqually responded to the initiation by BPA staff (with no concerns). No further correspondence was received from tribes through the 30-day period after BPA's determination of effect letters.</p>		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> There would be disturbance to soils from the planned excavation for the concrete pad in the tower footprint, the power line conduit run, and the transformer installation. Soil volumes moved would reach up to 100 cubic yards and would be managed using Best Management Practices (BMP) for construction; the native soil would be used to the extent possible to backfill excavations where design does not call for imported media such as sand. Geology would not be affected as work would remain in the soil profile with depths no greater than about four feet.</p>		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The planned installations temporarily disturb about 0.02 acres of mixed native/non-native and invasive vegetation. The permanent conversion of previously-disturbed tower interior ground and transmission line ROW to concrete pad mounts for the equipment cabinetry and transformer, respectively, would total approximately 220 square feet. The limited disturbance and conversion here would not affect the quality of the habitat of the wider area. No special-status species are present, and bare ground would be amended with an appropriate seed mix for the area.</p>		

4. **Wildlife** (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)



Explanation: The work would not impact wildlife to a measurable extent. It is feasible that the radio frequency could deter nesting or roosting and would thus limit long-term exposure of birds (migratory, or eagles) and other wildlife to the frequencies. The special-status species that could occur in the general vicinity – marbled murrelet, streaked horn lark, and yellow-billed cuckoo – would not be expected to occur in this highly modified and densely populated location.

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



Explanation: The project location is in the Hylebos Creek watershed that drains to the Puget Sound's Commencement Bay. It is about 0.4 miles from a forested wetland, and 1.2 miles to a salmonid-bearing stream. The small increase in impervious surface from the concrete pad installation would be insignificant in the context of the highly-developed suburban landscape through which the transmission line traverses. Sediment loss from excavation activities would be limited by BMPs and would therefore not impact the nearby water bodies.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: Wetlands are about 0.4 miles from the site, and are surrounded by development. The slight increase in runoff from the installation, and any sediment that may exit the work zone, would be unlikely to reach these surface waters.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: There would be no detrimental impact to groundwater and aquifers with the proposed installation because the increase in impervious surface would be insignificant, and the areal and temporal extent of excavation would be minor.

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



Explanation: The project area is located on land owned by the city of Federal Way, WA. The proposed co-location of a privately-operated communication facility on a BPA tower and in a BPA transmission ROW would not conflict with the current uses of the land: a BPA transmission line corridor easement, and a city-maintained multi-use path.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The location of the installation would be the existing steel lattice tower (the antennae, the cable, the ice bridge), the ground directly underneath it (pad and equipment cabinetry, and fence), and at ground level near 12th Avenue SW (the transformer). The co-located communication facility equipment would constitute a noticeable change to the tower and landscape visible from the multi-use path and the bounding roads. From greater distances, there would be no increased visibility of infrastructure as the antennae would be about 28 feet from the tower top (rising to 97 feet above ground, while the tower stands 125 feet tall). Overall, the additions would not be inconsistent with the transmission infrastructure in this corridor.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Temporary effects to local air quality by dust and vehicle emissions from construction activity would be negligible.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Temporary increases to the noise levels of the surrounding area would be expected during construction, but they would not be significant and they would occur during normal working hours. Normal operational noise from the new equipment at ground level would possibly be noticed by passers-by at close proximity, but would not pose a nuisance.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: Trained professionals would perform the necessary installation and maintenance under OSHA guidelines for safe procedures around electrified facilities and radio frequencies. The public would be excluded from the operating area at the tower by a locked fence and from the transformer by a locked shell.

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: The proponent, Verizon Wireless, is responsible for notification and permitting with the underlying landowner, the city of Federal Way, WA.

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

Signed: /s/ Michael J. O'Connell
Michael J. O'Connell

Date: March 31, 2016