

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Augspurgen Mountain Communication Site Equipment Upgrades

Project Numbers: P00834 and P01237

Project Managers: Ben Younce, TEP-CSB-1
Molly Kovaka, TEP-CSB-2

Location: Skamania County, 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: The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to upgrade, replace, refurbish and maintain equipment at its Augspurgen Mountain Communication Site. The proposed project is located on BPA fee-owned property in southeast Skamania County, Washington, in T3N R9E Section 21.

All proposed project activities would take place within the existing communication building and cleared facility footprint, and would include the following:

- Replace the existing engine generator located inside the communication building
- Install a new heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system in the building
- Mount a galvanized access platform and ladder to the west side of the building to allow for maintenance access to the new HVAC system.
- Remove two air intake hoods from the communication building. Fill, patch, and paint the openings to match the existing building color
- Remove an abandoned 30 ft. wood pole located on the west side of the communications building to allow room for the installation of the HVAC access platform and ladder. This wood pole removal would not exceed 10 cubic yards of soil disturbance.
- Clean and re-paint the existing propane tank white
- Inspect the connection between the propane tank and gas line to the building. Repair the gas line if needed, upon inspection. This would require a trench approximately 36 in. deep and 40 ft. long.
- Hand excavate 18 in. potholes near the tower footings and bond grounding bars to the grounding mat that surround the tower footings for lightning protection
- Repair the existing ground mat, if needed, upon inspection. This would require additional 18 in. potholes immediately adjacent to and surrounding the tower footings to access the grounding mat.
- Install new communication equipment inside the building.
- Install two new 21 ft. tall VHF antennas on top of the existing tower and run new coax cable to the existing VHF radios inside the building. Once the new antennas are tested and accepted, the old antenna and radio equipment would be retired from the site.

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/ Becky Hill

Becky Hill
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Gene Lynard

Gene Lynard
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason

Stacy L. Mason
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: June 22, 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: Augspurgen Mountain Communication Site Equipment Upgrades

Project Site Description

BPA’s Augspurgen Mountain communication site is located on BPA fee-owned land in southeast Skamania County, Washington in T3N R9E Section 21. The communication site is two miles north of the Columbia River, six miles east of Carson, Washington and eight miles northwest of Hood River, Oregon.

The BPA Augspurgen Mountain communication site is located in the Cascade Mountain range, on the Augspurgen Mountain ridgeline approximately 3,000 ft. above sea level. The region is predominantly Douglas fir vegetation on steep, volcanic, mountainous terrain. The Gifford Pinchot National Forest, State of Washington forest properties, and private timberlands surround the BPA fee-owned parcel. This Augspurgen Mountain ridgeline also serves as the boundary line for the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA). The western half of the BPA communication building and propane tank, and the wood pole are located inside the CRGNSA designated area. The steel communication tower, eastern half of the communication building, and eastern half of the propane tank fall outside of the CRGNSA designated area. All work would take place within the existing communication building and cleared facility footprint.

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 initiated Section 106 consultation on October 29, 2015 with the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), the U.S. Forest Service-Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and the U.S. Forest Service-Gifford Pinchot National Forest.</p> <p>BPA re-initiated Section 106 consultation on March 11, 2016 to add the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, and the Nez Perce Tribe as consulting parties.</p> <p>On May 23, 2016, Washington DAHP concurred with BPA’s findings that no historic properties would likely be affected because of this project. No response was received from The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, the Nez Perce Tribe, the U.S. Forest Service-Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area or the U.S. Forest Service-Gifford Pinchot National Forest.</p> <p>Should cultural deposits be encountered during construction activities, work shall halt immediately, and the BPA archaeologist should be notified.</p>		

<p>2. Geology and Soils</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Soil at the communication site is Undusk gravelly loam. Less than 10 cubic yards of soil is expected to be moved as a result of this project.</p> <p>Upon inspection of the gas line connection to the propane tank, it may be determined that the gas line should be repaired or replaced. The replacement would require a 36-inch deep trench approximately 40-ft. long between</p>		

the communication building and the propane tank.

Upon inspection of the grounding mat surrounding the communication tower footings, it may need to be repaired or replaced. This would require additional 18 in. potholes immediately adjacent to and surrounding the tower footings to access the grounding mat.

A Pollution Abatement Clearance request was submitted for the project. Disturbed soil will be reused to backfill holes. Significant excess soil is not expected to be generated due to project activities. If excess soil is generated, there is adequate flat, bare BPA property near the communication building to spread it. Revegetation with native species will be required if excess soil is spread on top of existing vegetation.

3. **Plants** (including federal/state special-status species)

Explanation: No sensitive species present. The project area is primarily bare ground, gravel and large rock. Minimal vegetation grows within the project area.

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

Explanation: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Lacy Washington Office, was engaged on April 26, 2016 for Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 7 informal consultation with a May Affect, but is Not Likely to Adversely Affect (NLAA) finding memo for the Northern spotted owl. The USFWS concurred with these findings on May 3, 2016 with memo # OIEWFW00-2016-1-0732.

Proposed project work would occur in phases over three years starting in the summer of 2016. To achieve this NLAA determination, project activities would only be allowed between July 16 and December 31 of each year.

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

Explanation: There are no wetlands or waterways within the project area. The closest waterbody is an intermittent stream approximately 890 ft. east of the communication site.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: There are no wetlands or waterways within the project area. The closest wetland greater than one mile away from the communication site.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: All proposed ground disturbance activities are not expected to impact groundwater resources in the region. The nearest EPA Region 10 sole source aquifer is over 30 miles away.

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

Explanation: Half of the communication site is situated in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA). The portion of the project area within the CRGNSA would be located in an 'Open Space' land use designation. The project would involve the operation and maintenance of existing BPA transmission facilities, and is within the range of activities covered under the Savings provisions of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area Act of 1986. No change to current land use proposed. The area would continue its present use as a communications facility.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: Portions of the Augspurgen Mountain communication site are visible from 9 Key Viewing Areas (KVAs). Although the overall communication site is visible from KVAs, the project activities and changes would not be visible to KVAs because trees obstruct the line of sight and the addition of whip antennas to the top of the

communication tower would be too small of a diameter to discern from a distance. Furthermore, the changes to the communication site would not be significantly different from its current visible state.

The BPA Augspurgen Mountain steel communication tower is located outside of the CRGNSA boundary line. Two new 21 ft.-tall whip antennas would be mounted to the top of the existing 69 ft.-tall tower, and one existing 21 ft. whip antenna would be removed from the top of the tower once the new antennas are tested and accepted. The new equipment would not be noticeably different from existing conditions.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Small amounts of dust and vehicle emissions due to construction.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise from the new heating, ventilation and air conditioning equipment would be intermittent during would not be noticeably different from the current ambient noise levels.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: No impact to human health and 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: All work would occur on BPA fee-owned property, with little potential to affect adjacent landowners.

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

Signed: /s/ Becky Hill Date: June 22, 2016
Becky Hill, ECT-4
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Flux Resources, LLC