

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Sunnyside Radio Station VHF Radio System Upgrade

Project No.: P01237

Project Manager: Molly Kovaka, TEP-CSB-2

Location: Yakima 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 is proposing to replace the aging VHF radio system at its Sunnyside Radio Station in Yakima County, Washington with a simple, modern VHF radio system. The replacement would help improve voice coverage across BPA's service area and is coordinated with similar efforts at many radio stations under BPA's "Mobile-REDI" project.

A grounding bar and lightning-protection equipment would be installed in the communication building and would be bonded to the existing grounding mat within the station yard. Hand-excavation of two 18-inch-deep holes to perform the grounding mat bonding would be the only ground-disturbing activity for the project.

Components of the existing interior charger rack would be replaced or upgraded to accommodate new equipment. Electronic equipment supporting the radio system backhaul data network - a system of radios, fiber, and phone lines that takes information from remote field sites back to BPA's core communication network and control centers - would be installed in new or existing interior communications racks. Two 20-foot-long VHF rod antennas and associated coaxial cable would be installed on the existing tower, and one existing 20-foot-tall antenna would be removed. New coaxial connection kits would be installed at the building's exterior ports to support cable passage.

Lastly, new VHF radios (repeaters) would be installed in the communication building and connected to the antennas and coaxial cable. All old equipment would be retired from the site and either disposed of or returned to inventory for spares or parts.

Work would be conducted over a three year period, starting in the summer of 2016.

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/ Stacy L. Mason

Date: June 21, 2016

Stacy L. Mason

NEPA Compliance Officer

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

All work would occur within the existing Sunnyside Radio Station building or fenced yard. The radio station is located in semiarid south central Washington, Yakima County, and is situated on a ridgetop with 360-degree unobstructed views. The surrounding vegetation is composed of the native and non-native herbaceous and small woody plant species typically associated with the shrubsteppe type like sagebrush and perennial grasses. The streams in the vicinity are intermittent in nature.

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> The project area has been previously surveyed; no cultural resources were identified. The proposed undertaking would take place within a previously disturbed area: the graveled yard of the existing Sunnyside Radio Station. BPA has determined that the undertaking would have no potential to cause effects (36 CFR 800.3(a)(1)).</p>		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> All work would be inside the fenced radio station yard. The two hand-excavated pits for spot-welding to the grounding mats would extend 18 inches through the graveled yard surface and the previously disturbed soil and fill of the yard.</p>		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> All travel would be on established access roads, and all work would occur inside the denuded, fenced station yard. No plants, including special status species, would be affected.</p>		
4. Wildlife (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> No impacts to wildlife, including special-status species, would be expected with the project. The level of activity and noise would not rise above typical maintenance projects at the site so habituated wildlife in the immediate vicinity would not be disturbed.</p>		

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



Explanation: The project would be located in the developed radio station footprint that is situated on a dry ridgetop with only intermittent stream beds nearby. Work would also be taking place in the dry early summer season so any runoff concerns would be minimized.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: There are no wetlands in the project's zone of potential impact.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: The hand-excavation would not extend past the 18 inches needed to access the grounding mat and would therefore have no potential to impact groundwater or aquifers.

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



Explanation: There would be no impact to land use or specially designated areas. The ridgetop on which the station is situated hosts two other radio tower stations, and the surrounding area appears to be comprised of open grazing land on privately- and publicly-owned land.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The two VHF rod antennas that would replace one existing antenna would be similar in appearance and size to the existing unit.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: There would be no impact to air quality.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: There would be temporary increases in localized noise around work activities to take place in the communication building and in the radio station yard. It would be expected that noise levels would remain within the normal range expected for activities that would be manual in nature.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: Public health and safety would not be impacted from the work that would be localized to restricted-area radio station fenced grounds. Worker health and safety would not be adversely impacted as OSHA guidelines would be followed as a term of the contract and as protocol for BPA employees' work.

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 Sunnyside radio station is fully-owned by BPA and the work is small in scope so there is no need for notification, involvement, or coordination.

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 O'Connell, ECT-4

Date: June 21, 2016