

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** D Analog System Communication Equipment Removal (#WC Project)

**Project Manager:** Courtney Kimmel, TEPO-CSB-2

**Locations:** Douglas, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, and Spokane 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:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to dismantle and remove communication equipment at ten communication facilities located in central and eastern Washington. Replacement equipment has already been installed where needed; now BPA seeks to remove the obsolete equipment. The proposed work would improve work areas and structural integrity of structures that support network operations. Work would include, but not be limited to, dismantling and removing steel lattice towers, passive repeaters, and wood poles by crane or rope/pulley system as well as removing decommissioned antennas, waveguides, batteries and chargers, analog equipment, and other miscellaneous communication equipment from existing BPA communication facilities. Project activities would occur at the following BPA communication facilities:

- Boundary Substation
- Cusick Substation
- Davenport Radio Station
- Del Rio Radio Station
- Foster Creek Radio Station
- Metaline Radio Station
- Mount Spokane Radio Station
- Plum Substation Radio Station
- Sacheen Passive Repeater
- Sacheen Substation Radio Station

**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/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: December 20, 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 to environmentally sensitive resources and would meet other integral elements of the applied categorical exclusion.

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## Project Site Description

The proposed project activities would occur within or immediately adjacent to ten existing BPA communication facilities. The project areas associated with the ten communication facilities are located in central and eastern Washington in Douglas, Lincoln, Pend Oreille, and Spokane counties. The majority of these communication facilities are located in rural or remote forested areas, at high elevational peaks or ridges, and with few residences nearby.

The Metaline Radio Station project area is located on U.S. Forest Service - Colville National Forest property, the Sickler Passive Repeater project area is located on Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife property, and the Mount Spokane Radio Station project area is located on Washington Department of Parks and Recreation property. All others project areas included in the Categorical Exclusion are located on BPA fee-owned property.

## Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. <b>Historic and Cultural Resources</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The BPA archaeologist initiated Section 106 consultation for the ten proposed project areas on June 17, 2016, with Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), U.S. Forest Service – Colville National Forest, Washington State Parks and Recreation, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Kalispell Tribe of Indians, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Spokane Tribe of Indians, and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation.</p> <p>On October 12, 2016, the BPA archaeologist determined that implementation of the proposed undertaking would result in no adverse effect. On October 13, 2016, BPA received questions and comments on the report from the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (CCT). BPA revised the report to address the CCT’s concerns, and redistributed it for review on October 25, 2016, to all of the above listed parties.</p> <p>Washington DAHP concurred with the no adverse effect determination on December 5, 2016. No responses were received from the U.S. Forest Service – Colville National Forest, Washington State Parks and Recreation, Kalispell Tribe of Indians, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Spokane Tribe of Indians, or the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation.</p> <p>Should any cultural resources be discovered during project activities, then all project work must stop, and the EC lead should be notified immediately.</p>		

2. **Geology and Soils**

Explanation: Ground disturbance activities would occur where tower or passive repeater footings would need to be cut and buried in place or excavated and removed. Best management practices (BMPs) for temporary erosion and sediment control would be implemented. Where soil would be disturbed, the local area would be contoured to be consistent with surrounding conditions and reseeded.

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



Explanation: Very little vegetation exists within the ten project areas because BPA's vegetation management program traditionally prevents vegetation from establishing on the gravel surfaces within the communication facilities. Some project areas contain small areas outside the communication facilities' chain link fence for crane parking and communication equipment dismantling staging areas. Here, there are native and non-native grasses and intermittent small, low-growing shrubs.

There are no documented occurrences of any plants listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in the ten project areas; therefore, the proposed project would not have an effect on ESA-listed plant species.

Where the ground surface would be disturbed such that exposed soil would remain after project activities, BPA would reseed with locally sourced, native species.

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



Explanation: Disruption of normal wildlife behavior may occur from temporary elevated noise and human presence. A No Effect Memorandum has been written and is on file to explain the lack of impacts to any ESA-listed wildlife species as a result of the proposed project activities.

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



Explanation: The project areas associated with the following communication facilities are located within 1,000 feet of a water body, floodplain, or fish-bearing aquatic habitat. BMPs for temporary erosion and sediment control would be implemented to mitigate potential impacts to aquatic resources. A No Effect Memorandum has been written and is on file to explain the lack of impacts to any ESA-listed fish species as a result of the proposed project activities.

- Cusick Substation – Small Creek runs east-west along the north side of the substation, approximately 300 feet and downhill from the substation fence. This stream contains bull trout (ESA-listed), rainbow trout, west slope cutthroat trout, and eastern brook trout, and is a Designated Critical Habitat for bull trout..
- Davenport Radio Station – three unnamed stream tributaries are located within 1,000 feet of the project area.
- Metaline Radio Station – two unnamed stream tributaries are located within 1,000 feet of the project area.
- Sacheen Passive Repeater – two intermittent streams and associated tributaries are located within 1,000 feet and downhill of the project area.
- Usk Passive Repeater – two unnamed stream tributaries are located within 1,000 feet of the project area.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: BMPs for temporary erosion and sediment control would be implemented to mitigate potential impacts to wetlands. No other project areas have wetlands nearby.

- Del Rio Radio Station – a freshwater pond and an associated perimeter fringed emergent wetland is located approximately 400 feet northwest of the communication site.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: No new wells or use of groundwater is proposed as part of this project.

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

Explanation: No change to land use is proposed as part of this project.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: Steel communication towers, passive repeaters, wood poles, microwave dishes, antennas, waveguides, and other associated communication equipment would be dismantled and removed from each location. No new communication equipment would be added; therefore, no visual impacts are expected as part of this project.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: Temporary dust and vehicle emissions would increase in the local area during deconstruction and removal activities. The temporary increase would not have the potential for exceeding the National Ambient Air Quality Standards or significantly contribute to visibility reduction or regional haze. BMPs would be implemented to reduce emission and dust levels.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: Increased noise levels during deconstruction and removal project activities would be temporary and limited to daylight hours. Project work at most sites would take less than 2 weeks to complete. BMPs would be implemented to reduce noise levels.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: At the Metaline and Mount Spokane communication facilities, the underlying landowners (USFS-Colville National Forest and the Washington Department of Parks and Recreation), stipulated that BPA provide traffic control flaggers during project activities to ensure the public using the narrow access roads would be aware of BPA's activities to increase human 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:

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### **Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Description: Most facilities associated with this project are located on BPA fee-owned property. BPA coordinated with the U.S. Forest Service - Colville National Forest for the Metaline communication site, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and Chelan Public Utility District for the Sickler Passive Repeater, and the Washington Department of Parks and Recreation for Mount Spokane.

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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

Becky Hill  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Flux Resources, LLC

Date: December 20, 2016