

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) Test Center Removal Project

**Project Manager:** Jody Solmonsson TEP-CSB-2

**Location:** Wasco County, Oregon

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B4.10 Removal of electric transmission facilities

**Description of the Proposed Action:** BPA proposes to remove the HVDC Test Center facility to make room for potential future development around the adjacent Big Eddy Substation in The Dalles, Oregon. The facility has been abandoned and in disrepair for some time. Presence of the HVDC Test Center has limited development next to the Big Eddy Substation because it is in one of the last remaining areas available for expansion and interconnection of new projects. Project activities would include removal of facilities and restoration of the ground under the HVDC Test Center, attached fog chamber, and adjacent control house. Existing equipment inside and outside the buildings would be removed and transported to an appropriate waste management facility. The approximately 107,000 square foot area beneath the buildings would be restored to surrounding ground elevation and the area would be rocked and graded. No new access road work would be needed for the project.

**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/ Claire McClory

Claire McClory

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: April 11, 2017

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

The HVDC Test Center is situated within the BPA Big Eddy Substation complex located in The Dalles, Wasco County, Oregon. The Big Eddy Substation complex occupies a large hilltop between US 197 and Columbia View Drive. The HVDC Test Center is comprised of a power support building, a control house, and a fog chamber, southeast of the Big Eddy Substation. The foundation is supported by concrete and the buildings are surrounded by rocked and concrete parking areas.

### Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
<b>1. Historic and Cultural Resources</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The HVDC Test Center is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Demolition would result in an adverse effect to historic properties. SHPO concurred on BPA's determination of adverse effect on May 29, 2015. BPA entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Oregon SHPO on October 16, 2015, to identify mitigation for the adverse effect. As part of the MOA, a Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Report (HABS/HAER) was required prior to building demolition. On December 28, 2016, the National Park Service acknowledged receipt of BPA's final HABS/HAER report and published the documentation in the National Register of Historic Places under project number OR-186-A. Final documentation of the HABS/HAER allows for BPA to move forward with project demolition, per the MOA.</p> <p>✓ After building demolition, BPA would create a two-year traveling exhibit to showcase the history of the HVDC Test Center.</p>		
<b>2. Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The HVDC Test Center facilities are surrounded by a rocked substation parking area. Demolition would temporarily disrupt the non-native fill soils in the vicinity. The area would be graded and re-rocked after facility removal.</p>		
<b>3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> No special-status species present.</p>		
<b>4. Wildlife (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> No special-status species present.</p>		

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



Explanation: None present.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: None present.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: An abandoned dry well, approximately 10 feet in depth, would be formally decommissioned after building demolition is completed. Ground disturbance for decommissioning the well would be in an area that is already disturbed.

- ✓ The dry well would be sampled for hazardous materials prior to decommissioning. Any contaminated soils would be excavated and disposed of at an approved waste facility.
- ✓ The dry well would be removed and disposed of at an approved waste site facility.

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



Explanation: Land use would continue to be used for transmission-related activities.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: Removal of the HVDC Test Center would result in a minor change in visual aesthetics in the area. The HVDC Test Center is not publicly accessible and can be viewed from distant public viewpoints. Removal would not markedly change the appearance of the Big Eddy Complex.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Small amount of fugitive dust during demolition.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Small amount of construction noise during demolition.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: Low level (less than 50ppm) of PCB-contaminated media are present within the HVDC Test Center.

- ✓ All original asphalt, concrete footings, and equipment structures would be disposed of at an approved waste facility.
- ✓ If lead paint is identified, special handling and disposal BMPs would apply.
- ✓ If asbestos is identified, the abatement and disposal of such material shall be conducted by a certified abatement contractor prior to building demolition. Special handling and disposal BMPs would apply.

### **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: The HVDC Test Center is located on BPA fee-owned property.

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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/ Claire McClory  
Claire McClory ECT-4

Date: April 11, 2017