

# 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:** Chelan, Douglas, and Pend Oreille 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:** The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to dismantle and remove obsolete analog equipment at five communication facilities located in central and eastern Washington. The facilities were previously upgraded with digital equipment and removal of obsolete equipment 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 communications facilities. Project activities would occur at the following five communication facilities:

- Grand Coulee Passive Repeater
- Malaga Radio Station
- Sickler Passive Repeater
- Usk Passive Repeater
- Waterville 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/ Stacy L. Mason

Stacy L. Mason

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: March 9, 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.

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

### Project Site Description

The proposed activities would occur within or immediately adjacent to five existing BPA communication facilities. The facilities are located in central and eastern Washington in Chelan, Douglas and Pend Oreille counties. The majority of these communications facilities are located in rural or remote areas, at high elevation peaks or ridges, and with few residences nearby.

The Sickler passive repeater is located on Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) property, the Grand Coulee passive repeater is located on private property, and the Usk passive repeater is located on Washington Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) property. Malaga and Waterville radio stations 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
<p><b>1. Historic and Cultural Resources</b></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The BPA archaeologist initiated Section 106 consultation for the five proposed project sites on November 7, 2016, with Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Kalispell Tribe of Indians, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington Department of Natural Resources, and Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation.</p> <p>On January 20, 2017, the BPA archaeologist determined that implementation of the proposed undertaking would result in no adverse effect. Washington DAHP concurred with the no adverse effect determination on January 24, 2017 for the archaeological portion of the survey, and the historic concurrence was received on March 6, 2017. No responses were received from the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Kalispell Tribe of Indians, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Washington Department of Natural Resources, 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>		
<p><b>2. Geology and Soils</b></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> 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.</p>		
<p><b>3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)</b></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> No vegetation would be disturbed at the Malaga and Waterville radio stations because the sites have gravel surfaces with little to no vegetation. Temporary disturbance to low growing bunch grasses may</p>		

occur at the Grand Coulee and Sickler passive repeater sites. The Usk passive repeater is located in front of a stand of small diameter conifer trees with a low growing shrubby understory community below. Some conifer branches growing into the back of the passive repeater may need to be removed to allow construction crews to safely access the back side of the repeater. Disturbance impacts to the low growing shrub and grass community below the repeater would be temporary and minimal.

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

Disturbed areas would be re-contoured and reseeded with species appropriate for the light exposure and hydrology of the planting area, and would be native to the project area.

WDFW has requested that crews performing the work at the Sickler passive repeater only use low impact vehicles (i.e. gators or ATVs) when traveling between the passive repeater and the gravel landing area where the flatbed truck will be located. The access road and surrounding area was recently reseeded with native species as part of a habitat restoration effort. Crews will need to minimize impacts to vegetation and soils.

All construction equipment and vehicles are to be weed seed free before entering all properties to prevent invasive species spread. Additional BMPs are to be implemented where appropriate.

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.

- Sickler passive repeater: Per WDFW, work will not be allowed between April 1 and May 15 because of the big horn sheep lambing season

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



Explanation: There are no waterways or fish within any of the five project areas. 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.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: There are no wetlands within any of the five project areas.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: No new wells or use of groundwater is proposed at any of the five project areas. All proposed ground disturbance activities are not expected to impact groundwater resources in the region.

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.

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 two weeks to complete. BMPs would be implemented to reduce noise levels.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: No impacts to human health or 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: Two of the five communication facilities are located on BPA fee-owned property and there would be no visual or other effects to adjacent landowners. BPA coordinated with Washington Department of Natural Resources, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, and a private landowner for the remaining three facilities. Future coordination with them will be required when the crews are ready to perform project activities.

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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: March 9, 2017