

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: John Day-Franklin Fiber Optic Replacement Project

Project No.: PP&A Project No: 2066

Project Manager: Glenn Vanbergen - TEP-TPP-1

Location: Sherman, Gilliam, Morrow, Umatilla counties, Oregon, and Benton and Franklin counties, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to replace the existing overhead dispersion 36-count fiber optic cable with a non-dispersion shifted 72-count fiber optic cable, to improve BPA's transmission system and communication needs. The new cable has the same color and finish of the current fiber optic cable but would be 0.09 inches larger in diameter.

The project requires three new fiber optic wood poles (FOWPs) with anchors and four new concrete vaults would need to be installed, primarily at existing substations. Fiber optic wood poles that carry the fiber optic cable range from between 50 and 70-feet tall. New pole holes range between 7 and 9 feet deep depending on subsurface conditions. Vaults typically are 4-foot-by-4-foot-by-4-foot-square concrete enclosures that would be placed near new or existing wood poles. Vaults are either placed on the ground or partially buried in the ground. At 23 existing FOWP locations, new anchors would need to be added for stability and 2 structures would need to be rebuilt which would include cross bracing.

This project also calls for the burial of multiple short runs of fiber optic cable totaling approximately 250 feet. These runs would be used to bring fiber optic cable into and out of vaults connecting to substations and to relieve congestion points in high traffic corridors.

Twenty-nine temporary pulling/tensioning sites would be needed to remove and install the fiber optic cables, and 47 temporary guard structures, imbedded, non-imbedded, and aerial guard structures would be utilized. No new access roads are needed for this project; however, some improvements which would include adding rock and shaping roads may be needed. No trees would need to be cut for this project though some brush clearing may be necessary to establish pulling/tensioning sites depending on conditions at the time of construction.

Due to the existing fiber needing to remain active until the new fiber is installed, the project is divided into two phases. The installation of the new fiber is scheduled to begin at John Day Substation in August 2017 and end at Franklin Substation during March 2018. The old fiber removal would begin during September 2018 and would be completed in January 2019.

If prior to, or during, construction activities the proposed action may result in adverse impacts to resources that are not described within this categorical exclusion, coordination with the appropriate agencies and a reevaluation of effects may be warranted.

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/ Kevin George

Kevin George

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: May 31, 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: John Day-Franklin Fiber Optic Replacement Project

Project Site Description

The project traverses a combination of land that is either privately-owned or managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (Sacajawea State Park), Oregon State Parks (Coyote Springs Wildlife Area), Washington Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR), US Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), US Fish and Wildlife Service (Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge), and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (allotment). Land uses in the area include: agriculture, wildlife land management, industrial, graveled substation yards, and rural residential and public parks. Land cover types crossed include: agricultural/CRP/pasture lands, riverine, riparian, and steppe/scrub shrub.

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"/>

Explanation:

Based on the results of an archaeological investigation of the area of potential effect of the proposed project which considered the nature of the proposed action, its location, and setting, previous archaeological inventories conducted, and archaeological features recorded in the project area, as well as the results of archaeological investigations aimed specifically at the areas of disturbance identified for this project; BPA determined that this proposed undertaking has no potential to impact cultural resources.

Report No. 3823 (Cultural Resource Survey for the BPA John Day-Franklin Subsection of the John Day-Franklin Subsection of the BPA's Ross-Schultz Fiber Replacement Project, Sherman, Gilliam, Morrow, and Umatilla Counties, Oregon), dated April 10, 2017, and Report No. 3824 (Cultural Resource Survey for the BPA John Day-Franklin Subsection of the John Day-Franklin Subsection of the BPA's Ross-Schultz Fiber Replacement Project, Benton and Franklin Counties, Washington), dated April 7, 2017, and completed by Archaeological Investigations Northwest, Inc., was submitted to the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (OR SHPO) and Washington Department of Archeological and Historic Preservation (WA DAHP).

BPA consulted with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, Wanapum People, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation in July 2014 and informed them of its determination of no historic properties affected on April 13, 2017. WA DAHP concurred with this determination on May 13, 2017. No comments were received from the

tribes, and the 30-day OR SHPO comment period has elapsed, but BPA believes that OR SHPO is preparing a written letter of concurrence.

An archaeological monitor would be present to observe project activities at locations considered by BPA to have potential for the existence of deeply buried cultural deposits. In the event that archaeological or historical materials are discovered during project activities, work in the immediate vicinity must stop, the area would be secured, and the SHPO and the environmental project lead must be notified. Work would not commence again until the SHPO has cleared the area.

2. Geology and Soils



Explanation:

The project would require temporary ground-disturbing activities at existing substations and several transmission structures for the installation of imbedded fiber optic cable pulling vaults, buried cable trenches (in congested locations), guy anchor installation and replacement sites, new fiber optic pole locations, and transmission structure rebuild sites. No new roads are required for this project. Excess excavated soils would be collected and disposed of off-site. A project Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) would be developed and implemented. The SWPPP would address hazardous materials management, erosion control measures, access requirements, restoration, and management of work within sensitive areas. In sensitive areas, non-imbedded guard structures would be used. See OR and WA State plants below for additional ground protection measures. Therefore, the proposed action would only have temporary and limited impacts to geology and soils.

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



Explanation:

This project requires no tree clearing. All construction equipment would be thoroughly cleaned prior to coming onto project sites and subsequently re-cleaned to remove weed seeds, vegetative matter, soils, and oil and greases.

It was determined that known populations of ESA-listed Umtanum Desert Buckwheat (federally listed-Threatened) and White Bluffs Bladderpod (federally listed-Threatened) occur near the project area. The project area does not provide the required habitat conditions for the above-mentioned species. In addition, it was determined the project area is located several miles from the nearest Umtanum Desert Buckwheat and White Bluffs Bladderpod. For the above reasons, it was determined that this project would have “No-Effect” on these listed species or critical habitat.

WA State sensitive plants identified as potentially occurring in the vicinity of the project include: Wyoming big Sagebrush/Bluebunch Wheatgrass (McNary-Franklin #2 Structures 17/2 through 17/4), and Washington Piper’s daisy, Great basin gilia, Pauper milk-vetch, and Gray cryptantha (McNary-Franklin #2 Structure 22/4 to Franklin Substation). OR State sensitive plants identified as potentially occurring in the vicinity of the project include: Transparent milk vetch (John Day Substation through Slatt-John Day #1 Structure 21/3), Robinson’s onion (Coyote Springs-Slatt #1 5/1 through 6/3), Woven-spored lichen (outside ROW near Coyote Springs-Slatt Structure 21/4), Franklin sandwort Slatt-John Day #2 Structures 1/2 through 5/4), Thyme-leaved buckwheat Slatt-John Day #1 Structures 18/6 through 19/2), and Columbia bladderpod (John Day Substation along Slatt –John Day #1 to Structure 31/1 and between Structures 11/1 through 16/1). These species are susceptible to compaction and ground disturbance and are most vulnerable when flowering, which takes place during the spring through early-

summer and is least susceptible after the plants have gone to seed generally in mid-summer.

Project work has been timed to take place prior to plant development/flowering and after the plant species have gone to seed. In those areas where sensitive plants may potentially occur, impacts to plants would be limited by restricting the size of work areas, limiting vehicles to existing roads and landings, using non-ground disturbing methods to level pulling/tensioning equipment, cutting or crushing vegetation instead of digging and removing roots and seed bed, and removing excess soil from the project site for off-site disposal. Through timing and the use of non-ground disturbing/limiting construction methods, impacts to these species and their habitat would be minimal.

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



Explanation:

Western Yellow-billed cuckoo (federally listed-Threatened) - may potentially seasonally inhabit areas in or near Sacajawea State Park. In discussion with USFWS, BPA would apply late season work timing restrictions and would not remove or modify any suitable habitat.

OR State sensitive species identified as potentially occurring in the vicinity of the project include: Dalles mountainsnail (John Day Substation to Slatt-John Day #1 Structure 25/5), Painted turtle (Coyote Springs-Slatt #1 Structures 4/2 through 5/5 and McNary-Coyote Springs #1 Structure 3/1 through McNary-Boardman #1 Structure 1/2), White-tailed jackrabbit (Coyote Springs-Slatt #1 Structures 27/2 through 28/2), Washington ground squirrel (Coyote Springs-Slatt #1 Structure 27/5 through Slatt-John Day Structure 3/2), and Oregon Grasshopper sparrow (McNary-Coyote Springs #1 Structures 4/3 through 4/5).

WA State sensitive species identified as potentially occurring in the vicinity of the project include: Swainson's hawks (along McNary-Franklin #2). Biologists would monitor this area and where active nests are identified no work timing restrictions between March 1 and August 31 would be implemented.

Project activities would take place at times when identified species are hibernating, prior to or after seasonal migration, or species are at a point in their lifecycle which would allow them not to be impacted by construction activities. Additionally in areas where species may potentially exist, low impact construction and avoidance methods would be utilized.

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



Explanation:

This project would utilize limited and non-ground disturbing construction methods, have no in-water work or shade tree removal, and implement erosion and sediment control best management practices (BMPs) to prevent turbid runoff from entering waters of the State.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation:

The majority of construction work for this project takes place during the regional wet season. National Wetland Inventory (NWI) wetlands at several locations in the project areas include the Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon and Sacajawea State Park in Washington. Should access roads to structures or work areas be submerged or unable to support equipment without rutting, construction mats, track matting, using low ground pressure (high flotation) vehicles, and walking to work sites

would be utilized to provide access to, and to limit compaction and ground disturbance. In addition, ground disturbances and compaction at pulling/tensions sites would be limited by using cribbing to level reel trailers. Work areas would be restricted to the minimum area that is needed to work safely. Erosion and sediment control BMPs would be utilized to prevent turbid runoff from entering waters of the State.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation:

Project would not result in any groundwater withdrawals nor provide a pathway for groundwater contamination.

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



Explanation:

Prior to entering public lands managed by Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), Washington State Parks (Sacajawea State Park), Oregon State Parks (Coyote Springs Wildlife Area), Washington Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR), US Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge, and Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (allotment areas), construction equipment is to be thoroughly cleaned prior to coming onto project sites and subsequently re-cleaned to remove weed seeds, vegetative matter, soils, and oil and greases.

BPA's construction contractor shall contact operations personnel one month prior to needing access to project locations in the Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge, Coyote Springs Wildlife Area, and Sacajawea State Park, to coordinate work activities and public access management.

Within Sacajawea State Park, use stabilized road to the greatest extent possible to limit damage to roads and trails used by the public. If necessary to prevent rutting due to vehicles, use track mats or wetland mats to reach and set up pulling/tensioning trailer at Franklin-Hedges #1 Structure 2/7; use lagging or cribbing to level tensioning trailer; no ground disturbance.

Access Road rock for use on Public Lands would be from approved weed-free sources.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: There would be no significant changes in the location or fiber appearance, it would be the same color and finish but 0.09 inches larger than existing fiber cable.

Several new fiber optic wood poles, buried concrete vaults, and buried fiber optic cable runs would be located adjacent to existing transmission structures or near existing substations and would not significantly change the view quality in these areas. Replacement and rebuilt wood pole structures, anchors and guy wires would be similar in appearance, color, and location to the current structures.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation:

Small and temporary amount of dust and vehicle emissions due to construction. Dust control best

management practices including water for dust suppression would be utilized.

11. **Noise**



Explanation:

Temporary construction noise during daylight hours may include helicopter use. Operational noise would not change.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation:

There would be no adverse changes to human health and safety with the replacement of this fiber optic cable. In addition, the replacement of this fiber optic cable would improve BPA's transmission system and communication needs, increasing safety within the area.

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

BPA sent letters to private land owners and public land managers within the project area during January 2017. Additional access and coordination efforts are required 30 days prior to work activities beginning in the Umatilla National Wildlife Refuge, Coyote Springs Wildlife Area, and Sacajawea State Park.

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

Signed: /s/ Kevin George

Kevin George EPI -4

Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: May 31, 2017