

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Albeni Falls-Sand Creek No. 1 Transmission Line Tap

Project Manager: Erich Orth TEP-TPP-1

Location: Bonner County, Idaho

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: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to construct tap facilities on its Albeni Falls-Sand Creek No. 1 transmission line located about 4 miles north of Sand Point, Idaho. Northern Lights, Inc. (NLI) would connect to the Albeni Falls-Sand Creek line via the new tap and would build a new substation to serve local electrical loads.

The tap would be located on BPA right-of-way easement between structures 30/6 and 30/7 of the Albeni Falls-Sand Creek line. Structure 30/6, a double-circuit 3-pole suspension wood structure, would be replaced by two single-circuit 3-pole dead-end wood structures located side by side. Each new structure would have six to eight guy wires. A new disconnect switch also would be installed south of the new structures but north of the existing gravel driveway. The new disconnect switch would be installed on a steel stand with below-ground plate footings.

No new access roads would be required; construction equipment would use an existing gravel driveway located directly south of structure 30/6. Four or five ornamental trees that line the driveway could be removed for construction of the new structures and disconnect switch. Soil would be disturbed by construction equipment, auguring of the wood pole holes, and excavation for the disconnect switch footings. Disturbance resulting from removal of structure 30/6, installation of the new structures, and installation of the disconnect switch would be about 0.8 acre.

NLI has obtained a conditional use permit from Bonner County for construction of their new substation. The utility has also purchased the private property underlying BPA's right-of-way easement between structures 30/6 and 30/7 to construct their substation and tap BPA's Albeni Falls-Sand Creek line.

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/ Tish Eaton

Tish Eaton
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason

Stacy L. Mason
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: October 16, 2017

Attachment: 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

Transmission structure 30/6 is located on BPA right-of-way where it runs generally parallel to U.S. Highway 95 north of Sand Point, Idaho. Topography is flat at the project site with vegetation consisting of grasses and ornamental trees along a driveway. A row of conifers lines the eastern and part of the northern property boundaries (about 75 to 100 feet from the project site) with a more densely forested area to northwest. The site appears to have been used for agricultural purposes in the recent past. Adjacent land use is also agricultural with two rural residences to the west and southwest about 360 feet. The project site is about 40 feet higher in elevation and 530 feet to the east of Sand Creek and its floodplain.

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"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No potential to effect determination made by BPA on February 1, 2017. Idaho SHPO concurrence received on February 6, 2017.		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> About 0.8 acre of soil would be disturbed during removal of structure 30/6, installation of the new structures, and installation of the disconnect switch. This disturbance would be confined to BPA's right-of-way; any excess soil would be re-contoured on site and reseeded. Some excess soil could be used as backfill for the old holes depending on the sequence of the work.		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No special-status plant species are present. Four or five ornamental trees would likely require removal and grasses would be disturbed/removed. Disturbed areas would be reseeded.		
4. Wildlife (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> None present.		
5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including federal/state special-status species and ESUs)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> None present.		

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: None present.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: The depth of disturbance for the new wood poles would be about 8 to 10 feet and would not impact groundwater or aquifers. The switch stand plate footings, approximately 2 feet by 2 feet each, would be buried approximately 5 feet deep.

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

Explanation: No specially-designated areas present. The underlying agriculture land within BPA's right-of-way would be converted to transmission tap structures and a substation. The conditional use permit issued to NLI by Bonner County allows for this land use change.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: The two new wood pole structures, located in the same place as the existing wood pole structures, would look similar to the existing except they would have guy wires. These structures and the disconnect switch would be visible from Highway 95, the driveway, and the residences but also would look similar to other existing transmission structures on the right-of-way. The addition of the NLI substation would somewhat change the rural setting to a more industrial one while creating a visual backdrop to the structures and disconnect switch from the residences.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: Short term dust and vehicle emissions during construction.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: Short term increase in ambient noise levels during construction.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: No impact.

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: As part of Bonner County's conditional use permit process for NLI's substation project, a public notification was sent to interested parties and adjacent landowners and a notice was posted on the proposed substation property. The County also held a public hearing on August 17, 2017 where the conditional use permit was approved followed by a 28-day public comment period which ended on September 14, 2017.

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

Signed: /s/ Tish Eaton
Tish Eaton ECT-4

Date: October 16, 2017