

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Henry's Lake Radio Site on Sawtell Peak

**Project Manager:** Vincent "Charley" Majors—TEP-CSB-2

**Location:** Fremont County, Idaho

**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 construct a radio tower (Henry's Lake Radio Site) at an existing Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) radar facility on Sawtell Peak in the Targhee National Forest in Fremont County, Idaho. The tower would replace an existing UHF radio tower located a few miles away and would involve relocating the microwave beam path and raising an existing radio tower at BPA's Ashton Hill Radio Station that is also located in the Targhee National Forest. The proposal would help replace out-of-date radio equipment in which there are no reliable spare parts for repairs. The tower is being relocated because the existing tower location at BPA's Sawtell maintenance building does not have adequate space to accommodate new equipment and the location does not meet beam path requirements.

At the FAA radar facility, BPA would demolish an existing 4-bedroom sleeping quarters that is no longer in use by the FAA. The FAA has requested that BPA remove this building and locate the proposed radio tower in the building's footprint. After the building is removed, BPA would install a 50-foot, self-support, lattice tower on a 25-foot by 25-foot concrete foundation. A wave-guide bridge would be installed from the tower, through the adjacent remaining FAA building, where BPA's equipment would be located. Propane is already on site and therefore there would be no new tanks installed. No access road improvements are needed. Staging of equipment and materials would be on site, just southwest of the proposed tower location, within a graveled parking area.

At the Ashton Hill Radio Site, the existing 100-foot, self-support, lattice tower would be increased in height with a 15-foot tower extension. The increased height is necessary for the beam path requirements from BPA's Ashton Hill tower to Henry's Lake Radio site. After the extension is installed on the tower, a new 6-foot (in diameter) microwave dish would be mounted to the tower at 110-feet. Staging of equipment and materials would be on site, and is proposed to be on the west side of the facility's access road.

BPA would acquire a beam path easement for this 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/ Beth Belanger

Beth Belanger  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Motus Staffing & Recruiting

Reviewed by:

/s/ Gene Lynard

Gene Lynard  
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason

Stacy L. Mason  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: 10/31/2017

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.

**Proposed Action:** Henry's Lake Henry's Lake Radio Site on Sawtell Peak Tower Installation and Ashton Hill

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### Project Site Description

The project is occurring at two locations within the Targhee National Forest in Fremont County, Idaho.

The first location is on Sawtell Peak, which is currently developed as a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) facility. Sawtell Peak is located in Township 14 North, Range 42 East, Section 1 (Boise Meridian). The site is in a forested mountain range, near Mount Jefferson. The elevation is 9,890 feet.

The second location is at the Ashton Hill communication site. Ashton Hill is located in Township 10 North, Range 43 East, Sec. 19 (Boise Meridian). The site is in a forested mountain range at an elevation of 6,475 feet.

### 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> A Section 106 review concluded that there would be no adverse effects to historical or cultural resources. The Idaho SHPO concurred with the determination on August 25, 2016. The US Forest Service, Nez Perce, Shoshone Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation and Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation were notified of the project on May 9, 2016 and again on July 29, 2016. To date, neither the US Forest Service, nor any of the tribes have responded with interest in commenting on the project. On August 25, 2016, the Idaho SHPO office concurred with BPA's no effect determination.</p>		
2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> There would be minimal soil disturbance for this project. The maximum depth of disturbance for the Henry's Lake radio tower foundation would be 5-feet. All work is occurring on previously disturbed soils.</p>		
3. <b>Plants</b> (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> No special status plant species or habitat present at either location. The project area at the Henry's Lake radio tower would occur in an unvegetated area; the staging area is mostly graveled and sparsely vegetated. The project area at Ashton Hill is graveled and devoid of vegetation. The vegetation in the Ashton Hill staging area is dominated by pearly everlasting, yarrow, pentstemon, wild strawberries and unidentified grasses.</p>		
4. <b>Wildlife</b> (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> BPA staff discussed the project with Laura Bergland, the Eastern Idaho USFWS field office biologist. She stated that the project is unlikely to affect Canada lynx or North American wolverines because the project area has already been previously developed and has regular human activity. The Henry's Lake radio site is</p>		

located in the Greater Yellowstone Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone, designated by the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). Ms. Bergland also determined that the project would not affect grizzly bears because the project is above the timberline. Grizzly bears tend to concentrate below the timberline where there is a food source (pine nuts). Additionally, the project area would not remove any existing habitat and the construction period would be of a short duration from approximately mid-June through September. Furthermore, BPA construction contractors would be instructed to take precautionary measures to not attract bears to the project area (i.e. not storing garbage/food on site).

A Biological Evaluation was completed, which included the Targhee National Forest's sensitive species and it was determined that the project would have no impacts to special-status species at either the Sawtell Peak or Ashton Hill location, as both are previously developed with multiple communication towers and this project would not remove any existing habitat.

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



Explanation: The project areas do not have any water bodies, floodplains or listed fish species.

An unnamed creek is located approximately 500 feet north of the Henry's Lake site and the Ashton Hill site has a creek 1,000 feet to the southwest. Best management practices (BMPs) would be used to avoid erosion of soils during construction.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: The project areas do not contain any wetlands. A review of the National Wetland Inventory, soil information, topography and aerial photos did not reveal any wetlands at either site. Additionally, after visiting the site in early June 2016, it was concluded that neither location had any wetland indicators for hydrology, vegetation or soils, within the project areas.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: The project would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

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



Explanation: There would be no permanent changes to land use at either location. The proposed project is congruent with the existing land use at both sites.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The tower installation at Henry's Lake, and tower extension at Ashton Hill, would not change the visual quality of either project location because both locations are already developed with communications and radar facilities. Additionally, a Section 106 review evaluated visual impacts to historical resources and concluded that there would be no effect to resources listed on, or potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: There may be a small amount of dust and vehicle emissions during construction; however, there would be no significant changes to air quality during or after construction.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: There would be temporary construction noise during daylight hours; however, operational noise would not change.

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: Lead and asbestos testing of the FAA building to be demolished has concluded that lead and asbestos are present in some of the construction materials. These materials would be removed by a certified lead and asbestos abatement professional, in accordance with federal guidelines. The materials would be disposed of at a hazardous waste facility.

- 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: BPA has submitted to the US Forest Service, an application for Transportation and Utility Systems and Facilities on Federal Lands, Standard Form 299.

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

Signed: /s/ Beth Belanger  
Beth Belanger ECT-4

Date: 10/31/2017