

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: PacifiCorp McNary Substation Interconnection (*update to previous Categorical Exclusion issued on December 15, 2016*)

Project No.: L0316

Project Manager: Sarah Sprague

Location: Umatilla County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.11 Electric power substations and interconnection facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA is providing an interconnection to PacifiCorp at BPA's McNary Substation as described in the Categorical Exclusion issued for this project on December 15, 2016. Since issuance of the December CX, interconnection design has been modified—BPA will now also relocate and raise some transmission line structures to accommodate a PacifiCorp line route under BPA's lines near the substation, and a communication equipment vault will be installed outside the McNary substation perimeter.

BPA will allow PacifiCorp to route its transmission line under BPA's lines; originally, there was the expectation that PacifiCorp would route its lines over BPA lines to avoid the need for BPA to modify its structures. Through field and engineering input to the design process after the original CX was issued, it was decided that in order to maintain reliability, it is better to have the customer lines below the BPA transmission lines. In the prior scenario, a structural failure of the PacifiCorp lines would be more apt to threaten BPA system reliability.

To facilitate routing the PacifiCorp line under BPA's lines, BPA will do the following: remove the three-pole wood structure 2/1 of the McNary-Roundup 230-kV line and replace it with a new, similar structure approximately 125 feet to the south; and add a new steel lattice tower on the McNary-Morrow Flat No. 2 230-kV line approximately 375 feet south of McNary substation fence. In addition, the second tower outside of McNary substation on the foreign-owned Westland No. 1 230-kV transmission line will be replaced with a tower ten feet taller to facilitate the new BPA line configurations. To provide a junction in the critical communication path with PacifiCorp facilities, BPA will also install a four-cubic-foot fiber-optic communications vault below ground and outside the McNary substation fence.

In addition, the two wood-pole H-frame towers on BPA property that PacifiCorp plans to replace with two steel monopoles will now either be about 70 feet taller than the existing structures (from 120 and 125 feet tall to 195 feet) or a new three-pole wood structure will be installed about 600 feet to the south of the existing structures. If the new three-pole structure is used, it will be located on BPA right-of-way (ROW) easement across privately-owned land and will not be considered further in this document.

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/ Michael J. O'Connell

Michael J. O'Connell
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason

Stacy L. Mason
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: December 29, 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: PacifiCorp McNary Substation Interconnection – Project Update

Project Site Description

The McNary Substation is adjacent to the McNary Dam and BPA holds permits to operate the substation on US Army Corps of Engineers land. Portions of the project would be located within a half-mile and mile of the Columbia River and Umatilla River, respectively, which are Endangered Species Act (ESA)-designated critical habitat for bull trout, steelhead trout, and Chinook Salmon. The remaining elements of the project would be located in the Columbia Plateau in and around land cover composed of semi-desert grass and scrub lands and irrigated agriculture.

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"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The BPA archeologist has determined that the updated project elements are consistent with actions in and around McNary substation that fell under previous National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 clearances, and would have no potential to affect historic properties. Consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office or the potentially concerned tribes was therefore not initiated for this project update.</p>		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> There would be additional disturbance to soils with the expansion of work to BPA transmission line and communication facilities, and a local public utility transmission line. One BPA transmission tower removal, two BPA tower installs, one foreign-owned tower replacement, and all related temporary access road installations increase the overall amount of excavation and clearing for the interconnection project. This previously undocumented disturbance would total less than 2 acre, with about 6% of the total constituting permanent disturbance. There would be permanent loss of some soil and rock from the ground displaced by the new towers and the communication vault. The excavated material would be used as backfill to the extent it is suitable; otherwise, it would be discarded at an approved facility. Because the areas to be developed are small and have been previously disturbed mainly due to their position in existing utility corridors, the impacts would be minor.</p>		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The northern wormwood – a relative of sagebrush – was a recent candidate species for listing under the Endangered Species Act and is found along the banks of the Columbia River. Ground disturbance associated with this project update would take place outside the plant’s typical habitat and would not impact any occurrence in the vicinity. Noxious weeds are a concern in the ROW and mitigation measures would be needed to ensure minimal impacts to native plants.</p> <p>Mitigations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Procure backfill material and a native soil-stabilizing seed mix that are weed-free to prevent the spread of noxious weeds 		

- ✓ Utilize equipment wash stations prior to entrance to BPA lands
- ✓ Develop and institute a weed management plan

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



Explanation: One recent candidate (studied and not listed) and one federally-listed wildlife species would have some potential to occur in the project area but the likelihood is low for these. Washington ground squirrel's (previous candidate for Federal listing) preferred soils are not in the project area and the last occurrence in proximity to McNary substation was prior to 1938. The gray wolf (endangered) occurs about 25 miles to the east in mountainous woodlands, and would likely avoid the project near the developed McNary area with little to no disruption to general individual or pack movement.

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



Explanation: The federally-listed threatened bull trout and Middle- and Upper-Columbia River steelhead trout and the endangered, Upper Columbia spring-run Chinook Salmon have critical habitat in the Columbia and Umatilla rivers nearby. No impacts to these and other fish in the vicinity would be anticipated because there would be adequate control of erosion during and after construction by Best Management Practices (BMPs), and distance to aquatic habitat would be substantial enough to diminish greatly any quantities of sediment in runoff. Soil dust would be controlled using BMPs to avoid airborne deposition to water bodies.

Mitigations:

- ✓ Use BMPs to protect on-site drainage conveyances from construction activities and construction-related materials, including fluids from and for equipment, and caustic and turbid water
- ✓ Revegetate all disturbed areas upon completion with the BPA-approved seed mix

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: No wetlands would be disturbed by BPA actions and any potential runoff of compromised quality would be minimized with the BMPs that would be instituted for erosion control to water bodies, floodplains, and fish.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: Construction would be implemented utilizing spill prevention BMPs, so none of the work elements would be expected to impact groundwater, open water, or aquifers.

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



Explanation: There would be no agricultural use of the land at the time of construction, and open areas utilized for temporary construction roads would be decommissioned and rehabilitated as needed.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The common vantage point to the BPA project would be from Highway 730, about 0.3 miles to the south. As described above, the PacifiCorp towers on BPA land span the highway and are at 375 and 110 feet from the roadway. The BPA tower changes would be largely inconspicuous since the viewshed from the highway is dense with transmission lines and towers. The change in height (from 125 feet to 195 feet) and the pole type (wooden two-pole to steel monopole) for the PacifiCorp towers would be more perceptible. However, due to the density in line spacing across the highway, one would assume the impression on the casual observer would be simply the addition of a new tower style to the infrastructure clustered in the highway corridor.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Work would not impact air quality in the general vicinity during construction. There would be decreases in localized air quality where an element would require a concentration of vehicles and equipment. However, because the work is limited in time and scope, air quality impacts from emissions would remain localized, temporary, and not additive to general air quality of the region. Soil dust would be controlled using BMPs to avoid impacting air quality.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Work would occur in a fairly sparsely-populated area that is bordered by a four-lane highway. And, though work could produce noise during active construction, it would occur during normal working hours and would not be expected to disturb communities in the vicinity.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: Workers on the project would be required to follow all applicable state and/or Federal safety standards for work on energized facilities and around public space. There would be no impacts to public safety: access to the active work sites would be controlled and any road crossings would be managed using signage and flaggers.

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: BPA owns in-fee the land on which the work would take place and access to construction sites will take place on established transmission line rights-of-way. PacifiCorp will coordinate with appropriate landowners for its transmission line work.

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

Signed: /s/ Michael J. O'Connell
Michael J. O'Connell, ECT-4

Date: December 29, 2017