

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: North Bend Radio Station Antenna and Radio Equipment Installation

Project No.: P01237

Project Manager: Rian Dustan, TTBP-DITT-2

Location: King County, 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: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to upgrade its VHF radio system at the North Bend Radio Station by installing a new VHF whip antenna at the top of the station's existing 70-foot-tall communication tower. The new antenna would be used to test and verify functioning of the new VHF radio system for the Puget Sound Region of BPA's Mobile REDI program. A new coaxial cable run would also be installed on the tower to connect the new antenna to indoor equipment. The cable would be run through an existing wall port. The associated VHF radio repeater would be installed in a component rack inside the equipment building. No heavy equipment would be used and the tower would be climbed by personnel without the aid of a crane or lift. Work would occur over two days after July 15th.

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, Jul. 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:

<u>/s/ Katey C. Grange</u>	<u>July 8, 2021</u>
Katey C. Grange	Date
NEPA Compliance Officer	

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.

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Project Site Description

North Bend Radio Station is a small (0.1 acre) BPA-owned radio station at 3,250-Feet elevation on the western edge of the Washington Department of Natural Resources-managed Rattlesnake Mountain Scenic Area. Working forests composed of mixed conifers surround the station, with parcels in various stages of regrowth. No surface water resources are apparent within about 0.2 miles of the station grounds.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A BPA Historian and a BPA Contract Archaeologist have reviewed the undertaking and determined the activity to have no potential to cause effects to historic properties. The Area of Potential Effect is within an area that has been modified and artificially leveled during building construction, and a majority of the North Bend Radio Station has been previously surveyed (2014 Day and Schmidt). No cultural resources were identified as part of the 2014 survey.

Constructed in 1954, the radio station was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 2019 (BPA Microwave Radio Stations Technical Report, AECOM 2019). The Manual for Built Resources Microwave Radio Sites Addendum (AECOM, 2020) provides treatment guidance to navigate the Section 106 regulatory process. The project does have activities that require screening by the BPA Historian and it was determined that the planned work would not affect the character-defining of features of the radio station. Therefore, the activities do not require Section 106 consultation.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No excavation would occur.

3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be limited to inside the unvegetated, graveled radio station grounds.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project would produce intermittent noise during antenna installation that may cause temporary disturbance to adjacent wildlife. The station is inside a Northern spotted owl (US Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS] Endangered Species Act [ESA]-listed threatened) management circle associated with a historic observation. Marbled murrelet, ESA-listed threatened, has potential to occur in proximity to the radio station and has similar breeding habitat requirements to the Northern spotted owl. While no recent observations have been recorded, the USFWS has consulted on a recent project at the station noting that potential habitat is within the area of potential disturbance by work on the tower. The antenna installation and associated work for this project would be within the scope and range of effects discussed in the previous consultation. Per this previous USFWS informal consultation on tower work at the site – work that produced substantially greater noise – the minor effort on the tower for this antenna and associated equipment swap *may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect* Northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet when performed after July 15.

Notes:

- In lieu of a nesting platform survey in the surrounding 0.25-mile radius to confirm presence or absence of potential habitat or nests for the two potential listed-threatened birds, follow the USFWS guidance at the site and perform work after July 15.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no water features in close proximity to the station.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are in the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No excavation would occur.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would occur in the radio station that has been in operation per longstanding agreement with the Washington DNR.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: At three-inches in diameter, the 20-foot-tall whip antennas are minimal in terms of visual obstruction and would be anticipated to cause no disturbance to casual observers. They are in keeping with the site's purpose and typical appearance. Additionally, due to the continuous operation of the station since 1954, and the surrounding landscape that is shaped by industrial forestry, the elements proposed for installation at the station would have no effect on visual quality at the location.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The two site visits that would likely be needed for the work would be an imperceptible increase in vehicle exhaust for the vicinity.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minor metallic banging associated with the work on the tower and in the building and would not rise above standard maintenance work levels.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All workers would be expected to adhere to all BPA and OSHA safety requirements in performance of the work.

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: N/A

Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation: N/A

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: N/A

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: N/A

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: BPA has coordinated with the underlying land manager (WA DNR). All project elements would be in keeping with requirements of working in the Rattlesnake Mountain Scenic Area.

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 July 8, 2021
Michael J. O'Connell, ECT-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist