

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: PacifiCorp McNary Substation Interconnection

Project No.: L0316

Project Manager: Amy Gardner

Location: Umatilla County, Oregon and Walla Walla County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA is proposing to interconnect to its transmission system the new PacifiCorp (PAC)-financed power transmission project: Wallula (WA) to McNary (OR) 230-kV Transmission Line (“Wallula to McNary”). BPA’s construction-related actions pertaining to the Wallula to McNary line would be limited to the portions in and around its McNary substation in Umatilla County, OR. Other elements, such as permitting six aerial crossings of BPA lines by the new PAC line, would be located in Umatilla County, OR and Walla Walla County, WA.

The actions requiring ground disturbance would be concentrated within the proposed transmission line’s first mile out of the McNary substation, and mostly within the existing 125-foot-wide PacifiCorp McNary-Wallula-Walla Walla 230-kV transmission line easement on BPA’s property. The new line would be double circuited with PacifiCorp’s existing line, necessitating the upgrade from dual-pole wood structure to steel monopole tower style. The Wallula to McNary line would diverge from the double circuit at approximately 700 feet south of PacifiCorp’s existing McNary dead-end structure and head west in a newly allocated 125-foot-wide easement that turns north to the new substation interconnection point.

Ground-disturbing activities would include installation of substation yard equipment, and transmission line right-of-way (ROW) tower structure installs and associated temporary landings. Three pulling and tensioning areas on BPA land, each less than 1.5 acres in size would be required at the angle points of the planned lines (the new double circuit and the new single circuit). The proposed action would result in two new towers, and four replacement towers on BPA property. In the ROW, the disturbance would be minimized by locating new monopole steel structures in, or adjacent to, current dual-pole footprints. New temporary and existing permanent access roads on BPA lands would be used to access construction sites. Temporary construction access roads would be reinstalled if future equipment access is needed.

At the proposed substation interconnection site, BPA would accommodate the PAC interconnection by constructing a dead-end transmission line tower that would be constructed east of the bay where the McNary-Ross No. 1 Transmission Line dead-ends into McNary Substation. Additional equipment BPA would install includes a power capacitor bank, electrical bus structures to tie-in the equipment, a disconnect switch, and a circuit breaker. BPA would make all the necessary connections inside the substation yard.

The non-ground-disturbing elements of the BPA project include: the sale of the easement for the new line's single-circuit lateral spur outside the southern boundary of McNary substation as described above; modification of the existing PacifiCorp easement for the McNary-Wallula-Walla Walla 230-kV transmission line to go from a single to double-circuit line and corridor; and five aerial crossings by the new PacifiCorp line over BPA lines in Umatilla County, Oregon, and one aerial crossing in Walla Walla County, Washington. Easements would include allowance for routine, periodic inspection and maintenance, as well as emergency repairs on the transmission line structures and hardware. Maintenance and repair activities typically would include replacing poles, crossarms, insulators, and managing vegetation.

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

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel
Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: December 15, 2016

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 Site Description

The main elements of the project would be situated in and around the McNary Substation. The substation is adjacent to the McNary Dam and BPA holds permits to operate the substation on US Army Corps of Engineers land. Substation portions of the project would be located within a half-mile and mile of the Columbia River and Umatilla River, respectively, which are 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> BPA has determined that the undertaking would have no potential to cause effects (36 CFR 800.3(a)(1)). On September 8, 2016, the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) replied that the project would likely have no adverse effect on historic properties. The tribes contacted regarding the project were the Colville, Nez Perce, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), and Yakama Nation. The CTUIR worked directly with PacifiCorp and the project developer to mitigate any impacts and on January 7, 2016, wrote that their concerns were fully addressed in that process. The Nez Perce replied to BPA’s determination of no effect with a request for more review time. The Nez Perce did not have questions or comments in the 30-day review period. The Colville and Yakama Nation did not respond to consultation requests.</p>		
2. Geology and Soils	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Approximately seven acres of ground would be temporarily disturbed by project activities like landings, pulling and tensioning areas, and temporary access road construction, , while about one acre would be permanently disturbed for the installation of new tower structures and some improvements to existing access roads. There would be permanent loss of soil and geological resources in the areas displaced by the new towers. 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 or the substation parcel, the impacts would be relatively minor.</p> <p><u>Mitigation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reinforce exposed soils and seed them with an appropriate and native soil-stabilizing seed mix ✓ Develop a Fugitive Dust Control Plan 		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The northern wormwood – a relative of sagebrush – is a candidate species for listing under the Endangered Species Act and is found along the banks of the Columbia River. The substation would not harbor any plants, and the locations where the rest of the ground disturbance associated with the project would take place</p>		

are likely too far removed from the plant's typical habitat to have any occurrence. Noxious weeds are a concern in the ROW and mitigation measures would be needed to ensure minimal impacts to native plants.

Mitigation:

- ✓ Procure backfill material and a native soil-stabilizing seed mix that are weed-free to prevent the spread of noxious weeds
- ✓ Install and utilize equipment wash stations situated at entrance to BPA lands
- ✓ Develop a weed management plan

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



Explanation: Several candidate and federally-listed wildlife species would have some potential to occur in the project area but the likelihood is low for all of these. Washington ground squirrel's (candidate for Federal listing) preferred soils are not in the project area and the last occurrence in proximity to McNary 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. The Yellow-billed cuckoo (threatened) prefers woodlands with thick undergrowth and often nests in tall cottonwood and willow riparian woodlands and would be unlikely to visit the area.

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



Explanation: The bull and steelhead trout (federally-listed threatened) and the Chinook salmon (endangered, Upper Columbia spring-run) have critical habitat in the Columbia and Umatilla rivers nearby. No impacts to these and all other fish in the vicinity would be anticipated because there would be adequate control of erosion during and after construction.

Mitigations:

- ✓ Generate a stormwater pollution prevention plan (SWPPP)
- ✓ Use best management practices (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 detailed in the associated BPA Mitigation Implementation Table and document

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: No wetlands would be disturbed on BPA property and any potential runoff of compromised quality would be minimized with the BMPs described for erosion control to water bodies, floodplains, and fish, and for preservation of geology and soils. PacifiCorp permitted the entire project with the Oregon Department of State Lands for some fill and removal of wetlands that are outside of BPA lands.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: Construction would be implemented utilizing spill prevention BMPs. With these BMPs, and with the designed elements limited to mainly previously-disturbed and filled areas, no 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 and tensioning and pulling sites would be decommissioned and rehabilitated as needed.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The project would constitute a facility addition consistent with the overall visual nature of the area around a major substation and its connected transmission corridors. The fugitive dust control plan to be developed by the contractor would alleviate the production of dust clouds during work.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Work would not impact air quality in the general vicinity during construction. There would be decreases in localized air quality when and where an element would require a concentration of vehicles and equipment, especially when idling. 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. As detailed elsewhere, soil dust would be controlled so as not to impact air quality.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Work would occur in a fairly sparsely-populated area that is bisected 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 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: Bonneville owns in-fee the land on which the ground-disturbing work would take place; adjacent landowners to BPA are being notified of construction on their lands or on BPA easements by the project developer, PacifiCorp.

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 15, 2016