

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Sprint's Carson Communications Equipment Upgrade Project

Project No.: W0623

Project Manager: Jonathan Toobian – TELP-TPP-3

Location: Skamania 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 allow Sprint to upgrade their existing wireless equipment located on structure 10/1 of BPA's North Bonneville-Midway #1 transmission line near Carson, Washington. Sprint proposes to remove six antennas currently mounted at the top of the 90-foot-tall BPA structure, and replace them with six new antennas of similar appearance and size. Neither ground equipment or coaxial cable changes, nor ground disturbance activities are proposed with 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/ Becky Hill

Becky Hill

Contract Environmental Protection Specialist

Flux Resources, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Gene Lynard

Gene Lynard

Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: April 10, 2018

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: Sprint's Carson Communications Equipment Upgrade Project

Project Site Description

The project area is located on structure 10/1 of the North Bonneville-Midway #1 transmission line, in Skamania County, Washington, near the town of Carson. The North Bonneville-Midway #1 transmission line is located within a 300-foot wide transmission line corridor that is shared by the Underwood Tap to Bonneville PH1-Alcoa No. 1&2 transmission line. Structure 10/1 is in an Urban Area land use-designated area of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA), and is situated in an open, grassy field with Himalayan blackberry shrubs growing at the base of the structure. Carson Creek and its associated riparian corridor are located approximately 550 feet west of the project area, and the Columbia River is about 0.5 mile to the south of the project area. The region is primarily comprised of rural residences and relatively flat, open, low-growing agricultural fields and pastures.

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 Archaeologist determined on March 28, 2018, that the proposed undertaking has no potential to affect historic properties and no further review under the National Historic Preservation Act is required. The BPA Historian concurred with this determination on the same date.</p>		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The project does not involve ground disturbance; therefore, there would be no impact to geology or soils.</p>		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The BPA transmission line corridor surrounding structure 10/1 is an open field consisting of native and non-native grasses, weedy herbaceous species, and Himalayan blackberries. The transmission line corridor is managed for low-growing vegetation and there is evidence of frequent mowing activity. There are no documented occurrences of any plants listed under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in the project area; therefore, the project would not have an effect on ESA-listed plant species.</p>		
4. Wildlife (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Disruption of normal wildlife behavior may occur from temporary elevated noise and human presence. Due to the rural residential nature of the project area, most wildlife in the area is already accustomed to human disturbances. There are no documented occurrences of any wildlife species listed under the ESA, nor is there uniquely suitable habitat for any ESA-listed wildlife species in the project area; therefore, the project would not have an effect on ESA-listed wildlife species.</p>		

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



Explanation: There are no water bodies, floodplains, or fish in the project area; therefore, there would be no impact to water bodies, floodplains, or fish.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: There are no wetlands in the project area; therefore, there would be no impact to wetlands.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: The project would not impact groundwater or aquifers because there would be no soil disturbance activities associated with the project.

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



Explanation: There would be no change to land use at the project location. The project is located within an Urban Area designation of the CRGNSA. As such, this designation does not require an application for consistency review by the CRGNSA.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: Six existing wireless antennas installed at 91 feet above ground would be replaced with six new antennas that would be similar in appearance to the existing antennas. No significant changes to visual quality would occur with this project.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Small amounts of temporary vehicle emissions and dust would occur during construction; however, there would be no significant changes to air quality during or after construction.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise would not change.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: There would be no impact to health or human safety.

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: The project area is located on BPA fee-owned property. No landowner coordination necessary. No need to coordinate with the CRGNSA due to the existing land use designation.

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

Signed: /s/ Becky Hill

Becky Hill – ECT-4
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC

Date: April 10, 2018