

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** San Juan Islands Cable System Equipment Upgrade – Decatur Island

**Project Manager:** Joshua Ponder, TELM-TPP-3

**Location:** San Juan County, Washington

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B4.6 Additions and Modifications to Transmission Facilities

**Description of the Proposed Action:** BPA proposes to upgrade the San Juan Islands transmission cable system monitoring equipment within existing vaults on east and west Decatur Island. Excavation would occur adjacent to the vaults to bring cable from existing conduit into the vaults and to connect to the existing above ground control cabinets.

**East Decatur:** Excavation work would occur at the existing east Decatur vault located along Decatur Head Drive within BPA's transmission line right-of-way. A shallow trench (approximately 4 to 6 inches deep by about 7.5 feet long) would be dug from the existing vault to the existing above ground control cabinet to lay conduit for the cable-monitoring system.

Also on the east side of Decatur Island, BPA proposes to tap into existing conduit located at BPA's Fidalgo-Lopez Island No. 5 structure 5/10. In this area, the transmission line runs adjacent to Decatur Head Drive. Across Decatur Head Drive from structure 5/10 is existing buried conduit. BPA would trench from structure 5/10 under the paved roadbed (approximately 24 inch depth by 35 feet long) to the existing conduit.

**West Decatur:** Excavation work would occur at the existing west Decatur vault located along Harmon Ranch Road within BPA's right-of-way. A trench (approximately 6 to 12 inches deep by 130 feet long) would be dug from an existing wood pole structure (Fidalgo-Lopez Island No. 3 structure 7/6 where the overhead line transitions to the submarine cable) to the existing west Decatur control house. This proposed trench would be located within a previously dug trench where buried conduit currently exists. A second trench (approximately 6 to 12 inches deep by 8.5 feet long) would be dug from the existing vault to the west Decatur control house to lay conduit for the cable-monitoring system.

All proposed ground disturbance would be located in previously disturbed areas where imported fill was placed during the construction of the vaults and control cabinets.

**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/ Tish Eaton

Tish Eaton  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel  
NEPA Compliance Office

Date: August 2, 2018

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: San Juan Islands Cable System Equipment Upgrade – Decatur Island**

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## Project Site Description

Topography on Decatur Island consists of rolling hills with slopes that stretch from about 500 feet above sea level (asl) to sea level on the shores. Fidalgo-Lopez Island No. 3 structure 7/6 is located on a west-facing slope about 1,030 feet east of Jones Beach. Fidalgo-Lopez Island No. 5 structure 5/10 is located at the base of an east-facing slope about 75 feet northwest of the shoreline. On the transmission line right-of-way, which stretches from the east shore of Decatur to the west shore, vegetation consists of grasses with some shrubs bordered by deciduous and coniferous forest. Very low-density rural residential land use borders the right-of-way for most of its length across Decatur Island.

## 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"/>

Explanation: A previously recorded and National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) eligible site (45SJ00169) is present at BPA's east Decatur cable landing where the vault and control cabinet are located. The survey revealed that construction of the vault and control cabinet originally included imported fill material placed between these structures. Since the proposed trenching would take place within this fill, BPA has determined there would be no adverse effects to site 45SJ00169. There is also a previously recorded and NRHP eligible site (45SJ00165) at BPA's west Decatur cable landing. Because no work would occur within the site boundary, BPA has determined there would be no adverse effects to site 45SJ00165.

BPA's Fidalgo-Lopez Island No.3 transmission line is considered eligible to the NRHP as a contributing segment to the Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) for the BPA Pacific Northwest Transmission System. However, per BPA's MPD, normal, in-kind repair, maintenance, and upgrades do not necessarily affect the integrity or character-defining features of the transmission line. BPA has determined that the proposed action would not affect the setting, design, materials, workmanship or feeling of the line and therefore, the undertaking would have no adverse effects on this resource.

DAHP concurred with these determinations on June 11, 2018.

As previously agreed upon by the consulting parties in the HPPP (Historic Properties Protection Plan for Known Archaeological Sites 45SJ00165 and 45SJ00169 located within the San Juan Islands Cable System Project Area), an archaeologist will be present for any of the proposed ground disturbing activities at BPA's east Decatur cable landing where NRHP eligible site 45SJ00169 is located. DAHP concurred with BPA's plan to monitor the site on July 30, 2018.

2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Explanation: Minimal soil disturbance would occur when digging the trenches described above. All displaced soil would be used as backfill in the trenches. Potential for sediment movement offsite is minimal because work would occur during the dry season and not within floodplains or near water bodies.

3. **Plants** (including federal/state special-status species)

Explanation: Minimal disturbance to existing vegetation would occur. No special-status species are present or known to occur at the project sites.

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

Explanation: Work would occur in previously disturbed areas. Wildlife such as deer that use the right-of-way may be temporarily displaced during construction. No special-status species are present or known to occur at the project sites.

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

Explanation: No water bodies or floodplains are present at the project sites.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: No wetlands are present at the project sites.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: No potential to affect.

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

Explanation: There would be no change in land use and no specially designated areas are present.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: The trenched areas would look the same as before the work following revegetation.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: Short-term dust and vehicle emissions would occur during construction.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: Temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours. No long-term impacts are anticipated.

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:

- 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: Because the project would be contained within specific areas of BPA's right-of-way, notice of the project is not needed. Residents passing by on foot or car may notice workers and equipment for a short period of time although the activity would likely not look very different from normal right-of-way management activities.

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

Signed: /s/ Tish Eaton  
Tish Eaton, ECT-4

Date: August 2, 2018