

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Richland Substation Upgrades

**Project Manager:** Charley Majors – TEP-CSB-2

**Location:** Benton County, WA

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B4.11 Electric Power Substation and Interconnection Facilities

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes several upgrades at its Richland Substation. The upgrades include installation of a new control house, removal of a monopole tower and installation of a new microwave tower, radio equipment upgrades, septic system replacement, station service upgrades, relocation of an existing walking path, replacement of the radio path, landscaping using xeriscaping, and installation of a new access driveway, parking lot, and fencing. The fenced substation yard would be expanded within the existing BPA property to accommodate the upgrades.

The new control house would be 40-feet by 60-feet and would have a new septic system, access driveway, and parking lot. The microwave tower would be a 100-foot tall structure on a 25-foot by 25-foot wide foundation and would be located next to the new control house. Landscaping of grounds surrounding the substation yard would be done using xeriscaping techniques, such as planting locally-adapted plants, in order to minimize and eventually discontinue irrigation at the substation. Local electrical station service would be upgraded to improve reliability and meet current electrical needs. An existing walking path accessed via Thayer Drive, which is open for public use, would be blocked during construction and re-located, but would retain its function after construction is complete. Fencing surrounding the new facilities would be modified as needed for safety and security.

**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/ Elizabeth Siping

Elizabeth Siping  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Flux Resources, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Nancy Wittpenn

Nancy Wittpenn  
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason

Stacy L. Mason  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: September 17, 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:** Richland Substation Upgrades

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## Project Site Description

The project site is at BPA's Richland Substation on Thayer Drive in Richland, Washington. Richland Substation is located in a mixed-use area. There is a residential development adjacent to the north of the substation. Proposed activities would occur within most of the four-acre substation property. Of those four acres, almost two consist of the existing substation yard.

## Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
<b>1. Historic and Cultural Resources</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Washington State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurrence on no adverse effect determination was received on January 26, 2017. The Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation and the Nez Perce Tribe were consulted; no responses were received. The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation were consulted and requested subsurface testing of the substation yard on November 6, 2017. BPA's archaeologist conducted the testing on December 7, 2017 and submitted a revised cultural resources survey report on January 3, 2018. Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation responded via email on January 17, 2018, requesting a map depicting the location of survey transects and subsurface testing. The amended report was sent April 23, 2018. No further comments were received as a result of BPA's consultation.</p> <p>In the event any archaeological or historic materials are encountered during project activities, work in the vicinity would be stopped, measures would be taken to protect the discovery site, and the environmental project lead and consulting parties would be notified. Reasonable steps would be taken to ensure the confidentiality of the discovery site, including restricting access.</p>		
<b>2. Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Approximately two acres of ground disturbance would occur at the substation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The existing septic system would be decommissioned per Washington State Department of Health, Benton County, and City of Richland's administrative code.</li><li>• Erosion and sediment control best management practices would be implemented.</li></ul>		
<b>3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Work would occur in undisturbed areas, landscaped areas, and the previously disturbed substation yard. The undisturbed areas are vegetated with shrub-steppe plants as well as noxious weeds. The landscaped areas are vegetated with Kentucky blue grass and sycamore trees, which would be removed for the project. No federally listed or state special status plant species were documented or observed on the site.</p> <p><u>Note:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As part of its scheduled maintenance activities, BPA has recently sprayed vegetated areas for noxious weeds. BPA would revegetate the substation yard using xeriscaping techniques (locally-adapted plants) to significantly reduce water usage at the substation and to promote pollinator species.</li></ul>		

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



Explanation: The proposed work would occur in low-quality wildlife habitat—the previously disturbed substation yard and landscaped areas. No special-status species are known to occur at the site.

- Tree cutting would be done outside of the nesting season (between September 1 and January 31) to avoid impacts to avian species.

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



Explanation: No water bodies or floodplains are present at or adjacent to the project site.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: No wetlands are present at the project site.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: A new septic system would be installed to accommodate the new control house.

- The new septic system would meet Washington Department of Health standards.
- Spill prevention kits would be present on site.

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



Explanation: The proposed upgrades are consistent with existing use of the site. No specially-designated areas occur at the project site.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: Modifications would be visually consistent with existing substation equipment. The new microwave tower would be a 100-foot structure located next to the new control house.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions would occur during construction.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: A temporary increase in noise would occur during construction.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: No impacts to human health are anticipated. Construction activities would cause impacts to the use of Thayer Drive and a temporary shutdown of the walking path through the existing substation yard.

- The walking path would be closed off during construction to protect the public.
- Contractor would use a traffic control plan in accordance with local regulations.

### **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: BPA is coordinating with the City of Richland for the road entrance work from Thayer Drive. In addition, BPA sent a letter (August 2017) to consulting parties and landowners within 1/8 mile of the site that described the substation upgrade proposal. Two responses were received from adjacent landowners with requests to retain existing trees or to plant additional screening type vegetation. BPA has been in contact with those landowners and will be planting locally adapted vegetation.

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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/ Elizabeth Siping  
Elizabeth Siping  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Flux Resources, LLC

Date: September 17, 2018