

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Avista Kennewick Radio Tower

Project No.: LURR 20190149

Project Manager: Victor Hitchens-TPCF-MEAD-GOB

Location: Benton 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 Avista to construct a communications facility on land that is under Federal jurisdiction. Avista would build a new 60-foot-tall communications tower, which would have several microwave dishes attached to it. The new 60-foot by 60-foot fenced facility would contain the tower, a 10-foot by 26-foot equipment building and a 1,000-gallon propane tank. A trench approximately 3-feet-deep by 3-feet-wide by 170-feet-long, would be excavated to connect fiber cable from Avista's new equipment building to BPA's Kennewick Radio equipment building, just west of Avista's proposed location.

BPA would provide an easement to Avista for their new radio tower facility.

Additional communications equipment modifications would occur within the control houses at the BPA-owned Vantage and Walla Walla substations.

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/ Beth Belanger

Beth Belanger

Contract Environmental Protection Specialist

Flux Resources, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Doug Corkran

Doug Corkran

Acting Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: July 5, 2019

Attachments: Environmental Checklist

NE Memo

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

The project area is on a butte known as Jump Off Joe Ridge in Benton County, Washington, approximately three miles south of the City of Kennewick. The butte is developed with approximately fifteen other communication towers on the hill top. The surrounding area consists of wind farms and agricultural fields. The proposed tower and fiber installation is in Section 29, Township 7 North, Range 29 East.

The nearest waterbody is an unnamed intermittent stream, located 0.20 miles south of the project location. There are no wetlands in the area. The vegetation consists of lupines (*Lupinus* sp.), balsam root (*Balsamorhiza* sp.), milkvetches (*Astragalus* spp.), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), phlox (*Phlox* sp), cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) and various unidentified bunch grasses.

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> On April 2, 2019, Confederated Tribes of Colville Reservation (CTCR), Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), Nez Perce Tribe, Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, Washington Department of Natural Resources, and Yakima Nation were initially notified of the proposed project and provided with a map of the project area. On April 2, 2019, CTCR responded that the undertaking is not in their traditional territory. On the same day, DAHP concurred with BPA's area of potential effect (APE) map.</p> <p>After an archeological survey was completed for the project area, BPA submitted a no effect determination letter on June 3, 2019, to the consulting parties. On June 3, 2019, DAHP concurred with BPA's determination. On June 14, 2019, the CTCR responded again that the undertaking is not in their traditional territory. The CTUIR and Nez Perce Tribes did not respond to the determination letter.</p>		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Soils would be excavated and graded to install the new radio tower facility. The maximum depth of soil disturbance for the radio tower and foundation would be three feet.</p> <p>During construction, all appropriate Best Management Practices would be used to implement site-specific erosion and sediment control. All temporarily disturbed areas would be stabilized and seeded with native forbs and grasses.</p>		
3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Explanation: On May 23, 2019, BPA environmental staff conducted a site visit and concluded that there are no Federal or State-listed special-status plant species or habitats present at the site. Construction activities may impact non-listed plant species but there would be no long-term impacts to the species viability. In addition, all temporarily disturbed areas would be stabilized and seeded with native forbs and grasses.

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



Explanation: There are no Federal or State-listed special-status wildlife species or habitat present at the site location; therefore, there would be no impacts. Construction activities may temporarily displace non-listed wildlife but there would be no long-term impacts to wildlife.

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



Explanation: There are no water bodies, floodplains, or fish present at, or near, the project location; therefore, there would be no impacts.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: There are no wetlands present at, or near, the project location; therefore, there would be no impacts.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: The project is unlikely to impact groundwater and aquifers. The maximum depth of disturbance for the project is three feet. The nearest Environmental Protect Agency (EPA) Region 10 Sole Source Aquifer is approximately 75 miles east of the project location.

Spill prevention measures would be utilized during construction activities. The project would not provide a pathway for groundwater contamination.

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



Explanation: The project would not change the land use at the location and there are no specially-designated areas in the vicinity; therefore, there would be no impacts to these resources.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The construction of an additional communications facility at this location would be consistent with the existing use of the site.

10. **Air Quality**



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

11. **Noise**



Explanation: The nearest residence is over 1.5 miles away. Construction noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise would not change significantly.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: During project activities, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Project activities would not impact human health or 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 under BPA's jurisdiction and there are no nearby residents that would need to be notified of the project.

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

Signed: /s/ Beth Belanger
Beth Belanger, ECT-4
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC

Date: July 5, 2019