

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Holcomb Substation Expansion and Upgrades

**Project No.:** P01091

**Project Manager:** John Roeder, TEP-TPP-1

**Location:** Pacific County, WA

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B4.11 Electric power substations and interconnection facilities, and B1.7 Electronic equipment

**Description of the Proposed Action:** At the Holcomb Substation near Holcomb, WA in Pacific County, BPA proposes to expand the existing fenced station yard and replace the existing power control house with a new, larger, pre-fabricated power control assembly (PCA). The existing control house is at the end of its useful life, necessitating replacement of the structure and updating the substation's electrical system control functions. The station yard would be expanded to host the larger PCA and create enough buffer space between the PCA and other energized substation structures. BPA would also replace three potential transformers (PTs) in the existing yard and install fiber-optic conduit underground from the Holcomb-Naselle transmission line to a new vault in the expanded yard.

Approximately 4,700 square feet of land adjacent to the existing substation fence would be disturbed; 3,600 square feet of this would be permanently converted to impermeable and fenced station yard. Existing drainage infrastructure would be amended as needed, including installation of a new catch basin near the PCA and an outfall pipe. A vegetated directional ditch would be installed down-slope of the new yard and building surfaces would carry some storm runoff. The new yard area would require the installation of a metal grounding mat over which 18 inches of switchyard rock would be laid and compacted. The station's alternating current (AC) service system would be updated and would entail replacement of yard fuse panels, enclosed circuit breakers, energy metering, lighting contactors, an isolation transformer, and cabling to all yard equipment. The existing grounding mat would be repaired as needed to accommodate new connections. Equipment and materials staging, and vehicle parking would be done at the existing, leased graveled staging area adjacent to BPA's fee-owned property.

The PCA would be installed when the new yard is readied, a foundation is built, and station AC electrical service is routed. The 45-foot-by-16-foot PCA would span from the existing yard to the new yard expansion. A temporary fiber-optic run would be made from the old control house to the new PCA until the new fiber-optic line is brought to the substation. Existing power control components that can continue to be used would be moved from the control house to the PCA. New telecommunication and power control componentry, and electrical service equipment would be added to the PCA as needed. All new installations and fencing would be bonded by welding ground wires to the grounding mats.

**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/ Michael J. O'Connell  
Michael O'Connell  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel                      Date: March 2, 2020  
Sarah T. Biegel  
NEPA Compliance Officer

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:** Holcomb Substation Expansion, Upgrades, and Land Lease

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## Project Site Description

Holcomb Substation is a small (0.4 acre) facility through which two 115-kilovolt transmission line corridors run. It is about 160 feet from Green Creek, which is a salmonid-bearing stream on the opposite side of Green Creek Road, and is less than 70 feet from an unnamed intermittent tributary. Outside BPA's fee-owned substation, there is Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) land and private land in a matrix of timber parcels in various stages of regrowth.

## 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"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> A BPA archeologist surveyed the project area and determined that the project would have no effect on historic properties. On April 19, 2016, the Washington Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation concurred with the BPA assessment, finalizing BPA compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.</p>		
2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> The area of the substation expansion is a raised bench bordered by the edge of the substation, the intermittent drainage, and Green Creek Road. Soil preservation measures would retain soils onsite and excavation would not reach geological resources as the area is artificially raised.</p> <p><u>Note:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Implement the specified controls on the associated Mitigation Implementation Table (MIT); avoid unnecessary travel over erodible areas.</li></ul>		
3. <b>Plants</b> (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) included a web consultation of US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) threatened and endangered (TE) species records, and returned no potential plants of concern for the project. Additionally, the project would take place in regularly maintained BPA transmission right-of-way; vegetation cutting and herbicide application are typically done at least every three years to maintain safe clearance to transmission lines.</p>		

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

Explanation: Construction activities at the substation would occur within 500 feet of designated marbled murrelet critical habitat on DNR land. The project would not impact marbled murrelet critical habitat nor individuals of the species. A survey performed in a quarter-mile radius around the substation found no habitat typically associated with marbled murrelets. On July 27, 2017, the USFWS concurred with the BPA determination that the project would be unlikely to adversely affect marbled murrelets. Other USFWS TE species that could potentially occur in the vicinity also lack habitat in the project's area of potential effect. The breeding bird of concern, rufous hummingbird, could be breeding at the time the expansion area vegetation would be cleared.

Note:

- ✓ Schedule the site vegetation clearing to take place before April 1, 2020.

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

Explanation: Explanation: Ground disturbance would occur within 175 feet of salmonid-bearing waters at Green Creek (spawning and rearing for coho and chum salmon, and migration for steelhead trout). Also present, the Willapa River coho is a candidate ESA-listed species. The risk for sediment and dust input to Green Creek would be managed by soil conservation measures in and around the work footprint and by installation of physical barriers to material movement. Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for Chinook and coho is present. Though no effects to EFH are anticipated, the project falls within the coverage of National Marine Fisheries Service biological opinion WCR-2014-1600 (August 28, 2017, verification, NMFS Central/South Puget Sound, Lower Columbia, WA Coast Branch).

Note:

- ✓ Follow all MIT guidelines and specifications for construction. Limit ground disturbance. Inspect erosion controls. Restore the area as detailed in the MIT.

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: There is a wetland about 100 feet from the expected limits of disturbance for the project. As described in previous entries, the project's associated MIT would be a requirement of construction. Controls described in the MIT would prevent indirect impacts on this or other wetlands.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: Work would occur on developed substation grounds and on a bench adjacent to the substation. Excavation would not be deep enough to impact groundwater or an aquifer if present.

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

Explanation: All ground-disturbing work would occur on BPA fee-owned property. There would be no indirect effects to adjacent DNR-held lands or privately owned agricultural or timber lands. BPA has leased the existing adjacent staging area from the landowner; no improvements would be required, and the landowner would retain access through the leased area. Green Creek Road would be closed to through-travel for a short time while a crane is in place to lift and set the PCA into the yard.

Note:

- ✓ Close Green Creek Road only upon County approval of the traffic control plan.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: The work would expand the footprint and add infrastructure to an operating substation; this would represent a perceivable change in appearance but would be consistent with the existing use of the area and with the current scale.

10. Air Quality



Explanation: Air quality would be affected in the area around active work by heavy equipment. As the work is rather small in scope, the effects would be localized to the site and have no potential to be significant.

11. Noise



Explanation: Noise would increase during the project's active work. As the work is rather small in scope, the effects would be localized to the site and have no potential to be significant.

12. Human Health and Safety



Explanation: Workers would follow applicable state and BPA safety protocols; safety of the public or adjacent landowners would not be affected by the work.

**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: Parking and staging would occur in an adjacent landowner's improved, graveled lot adjacent to the substation. Pacific County would need to approve the BPA traffic control plan on Green Creek Road accommodating the crane work.

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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/ Michael J. O'Connell  
Michael J. O'Connell, ECT-4  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: March 2, 2020