

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Activities to Operate and Maintain High Voltage Electrical Substation and Switch Yards

Project Manager: Multiple

Location: Multiple locations in Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Montana, California, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine Maintenance; B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to conduct activities, listed below, to operate and maintain high voltage electrical substation and switch yards throughout the BPA service territory. These activities would include the following:

- Repair, removal or replacement of substation equipment and switch yard equipment, including but not limited to transformers, breakers, bushings, capacitor banks, voltage regulators, circuit switches, reactors, regulators, wave traps, radiators, circuit breakers, reclosers, disconnect switches, valves, wiring, lightening arrestors, buses and communication equipment, including fiber optics equipment, and any associated foundations. Equipment removal must comprise less than 50 percent of the existing equipment within the yard, as measured by, square footage of all the equipment within the yard.
- Maintenance and testing of equipment, including oil change-outs.
- Maintenance, replacement or removal of aboveground or belowground storage tanks and associated components.
- Maintenance, replacement or removal of an engine generator (EG) unit, the cover over an EG and associated components.
- Maintenance, repair or replacement of ground mats.
- Maintenance, removal, replacement, and new installation of the storm water drainage treatment systems.
- General yard work such as removal of contaminated soil, trenching, digging, removal of spoils, and replacement of yard rock.

These actions would occur in existing substation and switch yards situated on both BPA fee-owned land and land where BPA possesses an agreed upon easement with the landowner. No existing substation buildings would be altered or removed and no work within buildings would occur. The substation would be accessed using BPA's existing access road system and no access road improvements or reconstruction would be required.

General equipment used for this type of work would include cranes, excavators, bulldozers, dump trucks, vacuum trucks, and substation maintenance vehicles. No excavation activities would extend beyond the perimeter previously disturbed during original construction and

installation of the substation or switch yard. Any activities that involve hazardous materials, such as contaminated soil removal, would be disposed of at a designated hazardous waste facility.

Each project would be reviewed by the BPA NEPA lead to ensure that the activities fall within the range of those described in this Categorical Exclusion prior to initiating work.

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/ Laura Roberts

Laura Roberts
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey Grange
NEPA Compliance Office

Date: June 8, 2020

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: Activities to Operate and Maintain High Voltage Electrical Substation and Switch Yards

Project Site Description

Electrical substation and switch yards located in BPA's service territory, including Idaho, Oregon, Washington, western Montana and small parts of eastern Montana, California, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming. Project locations consist of existing high voltage electrical facilities where the underlying ground has been previously altered. During initial yard construction, several feet of soil was excavated to a specific depth, a ground mat was installed, and the area was backfilled and compacted with select rock to bring the surface to the appropriate grade. Substation and switch yards are surrounded by fencing and no vegetation exists in the yards.

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"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Project areas are located within a substation or switch yard, which has been previously disturbed. Project activities would not affect the historic character of the substation. Project activities would have no effect on historic and cultural resources; therefore, BPA has determined that this undertaking has No Potential to Effect historic properties.		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Operation and maintenance activities would not create substantial new impacts to geology or soil as existing yards were previously disturbed during original yard construction. Spoils from excavations for installation/removal of equipment or spill cleanup would be disposed of according to all local, state, and federal regulations.		
3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> There is no vegetation in the yards; therefore, the activities would not impact any vegetation, including Federal or state special-status species or habitats. There would be no effect to ESA-listed species.		
4. Wildlife (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> The proposed activities would not require habitat removal or disturbance. Minor, intermittent noise associated with project activities has the potential for temporary disturbance to nearby wildlife species. In those locations containing nesting sensitive Federal or state bird species (e.g. bald and golden eagles), timing restrictions would be employed to minimize nest disturbance. There would be no effect to ESA-listed species in the area. In locations adjacent to BPA substations or switch yards where ESA-listed wildlife species are known to occur, established measures or timing restrictions would be implemented, as appropriate, so that activities would have no effect on ESA-listed wildlife species.		

5. **Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish**

(including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)



Explanation: The proposed activities would not require in-water work. Appropriate Best Management Practices (BMP) would be utilized to keep sediment from entering waterways.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: The proposed activities would not require wetland work. Appropriate BMPs would be utilized to keep sediment from entering wetlands.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: Spill prevention measures would be utilized during project activities. No groundwater or aquifers would be impacted by the activities.

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



Explanation: No change in land use would occur and activities would not impact land use.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The activities would have minimal impacts to visual quality and the results would remain consistent with the existing surroundings of the electrical substation or switch yards.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: The activities would generate a small amount of vehicle emissions and dust during construction. Existing substation emissions may slightly increase or decrease according to equipment installed or removed. These changes would not significantly alter the emission profile of BPA substations.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Some temporary construction/activity noise would occur during daylight hours. Newly installed equipment may minimally raise the overall operational noise of the existing substation or switch yard. Project length may vary greatly from a number of days to several months, depending on the scope work.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: Workers would follow all standard safety protocols. 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: All activities would be coordinated with landowners prior to beginning work.

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

Signed: /s/ Laura Roberts
Laura Roberts, EC-4
Environmental Protection Specialist

Date: June 8, 2020