

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: South of Garrison Facilities Sale to NorthWestern Energy

Project Manager: Brian Altman – TSE-TPP-2

Location: Deer Lodge, Powell, and Silver Bow Counties, Montana

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.24 Property Transfers

Description of the Proposed Action: The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to sell its Anaconda Substation and its Anaconda-Silver Bow No.1 and Garrison-Anaconda No.1 transmission lines and transfer ownership to NorthWestern Energy (NWE). BPA would retain ownership of the Garrison-Anaconda No. 1 line terminal equipment at BPA's Garrison Substation. BPA would also retain ownership of the double-circuit transmission line towers on the Garrison-Anaconda No. 1 transmission line between Garrison Substation and structure 3/6. NWE would own the conductor, insulators, and hardware in this section.

The Anaconda-Silver Bow No.1 and Garrison-Anaconda No.1 transmission lines are located on lands for which BPA holds some easement interests and permits. The transmission line(s) and transferable less-than-fee real property interests would be included in the sale to NWE as part of the proposed action. In addition, the sale of these two transmission lines would require no ground disturbance of any kind.

The Anaconda Substation is located on BPA-fee owned land, which would be sold with the substation equipment and totals approximately 46 acres. BPA would retain ownership in fee of a small piece of property at Anaconda Substation (and ingress and egress rights over the remainder property) to install a microwave communications tower and indoor equipment. NWE would provide electrical service to this site for station service power.

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/ Douglas Corkran

Douglas Corkran
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel February 9, 2021

Sarah T. Biegel Date
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: South of Garrison Facilities Sale to NorthWestern Energy

Project Site Description

The project site is located in rolling hills and flat to gently sloping river valleys in west-central Montana. The transmission lines pass through forested slopes, open shrub-steppe areas and agricultural areas consisting mostly of flood-irrigated pastures and fields.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with the Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on April 17, 2020, determining that the Anaconda Substation, Anaconda-Silver Bow No. 1, and Garrison-Anaconda No. 1 transmission lines are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), and that the sale of these facilities constitutes an adverse effect. BPA also conducted a cultural resources survey along the Garrison-Anaconda No. 1 transmission line ROW and determined no adverse effect to historic properties, with which the SHPO concurred. BPA and SHPO signed a Programmatic Agreement (PA) on January 21, 2021, to continue consultation. The PA confirms that BPA would complete cultural surveys for the ROW of the Anaconda-Silver Bow No. 1 transmission line and the ROW of the Anaconda Substation both of which have not been systematically surveyed to inventory cultural resources. Completion of the PA would allow BPA to develop a Memorandum of Agreement to resolve any potential adverse effects. BPA also consulted with the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes and the Nez Perce Tribe, and the tribes declined to participate in the PA.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Sale of the facilities would not involve any ground-disturbing work.

3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Sale of the facilities would not involve any ground-disturbing work.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Sale of the facilities would not involve any ground-disturbing work

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Sale of the facilities would not involve any ground-disturbing work.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Sale of the facilities would not involve any ground-disturbing work.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Sale of the facilities would not involve any ground-disturbing work.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Existing land uses would not change as a result of the project. The area surrounding the Anaconda Substation is designated as a Federal Superfund Site from past contamination from the Anaconda smelter site. BPA is not a potentially responsible party for any of the liability associated with the Superfund site. No ground disturbance would take place associated with the sale of the facilities. NWE would need to ensure compliance with US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations for any future work within the Superfund Site.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Sale of the facilities would not involve any changes to the transmission or substation facilities.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Sale of the facilities would not involve any work or electrical changes that would change emissions.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Sale of the facilities would not involve any work or electrical changes that would produce noise.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not create additional health and human safety hazards.

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: N/A

Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation: N/A

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: Existing land uses would not change as a result of the project. The area surrounding the Anaconda Substation is designated as a Federal Superfund Site from past contamination from the Anaconda Company copper smelter site. BPA is not a potentially responsible party for any of the liability associated with the Superfund Site. No ground disturbance would take place associated with the sale of the facilities. As the future potential owner and operator of Anaconda Substation, NWE would be obligated to ensure compliance with all appropriate Federal and state laws (including, but not limited to, CERCLA and RCRA and their state equivalents), and US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and applicable state regulations, for any future work within the Superfund Site. NWE would also need to work with the appropriate regulatory entities to ensure access to the two transmission line areas and Anaconda Substation for remediation purposes (contamination clean-up and monitoring efforts).

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: N/A

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: BPA would notify underlying landowners that the new owners of the transmission lines would be NWE.

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

Signed: /s/ Douglas Corkran February 9, 2021
Douglas Corkran-ECT-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist