

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Franklin and Red Mountain Radio Station Upgrades (*update to previous CX issued on May 21, 2020*)

Project Manager: Debbie Staats, TEPS-TPP-1

Location: Benton and Franklin Counties, 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 upgrade two radio station sites with new antennas and equipment. This CX has been updated to include two additional microwave dishes, one on the 200-foot-tall tower at Franklin radio station and one on the 175-foot-tall tower at Red Mountain. Additionally, the size of the proposed new microwave dishes has increased from 6 feet in diameter to 8 feet in diameter.

The project involves three existing radio towers in total, two at Franklin radio station and one at Red Mountain radio station. The following work would occur:

At **Franklin radio station**, a 120-foot-tall, three-leg lattice tower and a 200-foot-tall, four-leg lattice tower stand side-by-side. A new Latchways safety climbing system would be installed on both towers. An existing 900-megahertz (MHz) grid antenna and associated coaxial cable would be removed at a height of 115 feet on the 200-foot-tall tower. On the 200-foot-tall tower, two new 8-gigahertz (GHz) high performance 8-foot-diameter microwave dishes would be installed at 150 feet and 180 feet on the tower. A new 8-GHz elliptical waveguide would be installed to the new lower elevation high performance antenna, routed down the tower and into equipment inside the control house. The 900-MHz radio in the communications room of the control house would be removed and replaced with a new 8-GHz radio.

At **Red Mountain radio station**, a new Latchways safety climbing system would be installed on a 175-foot-tall, three-leg lattice tower. A temporary 900-MHz grid antenna would be installed at a height of 160 feet, along with a temporary 900-MHz coaxial cable, which would be routed down the tower, under the existing waveguide bridge and into the control house. Then the older existing grid antenna would be removed and replaced with two new 8-GHz high performance 8-foot-diameter microwave dishes at heights of 140 feet and 170 feet. A new 8-GHz elliptical waveguide would be installed to the new lower elevation high performance antenna, routed down the tower and into equipment in the control house. The 900-MHz radio in the communications room of the control house would be removed and replaced with a new 8-GHz radio. An existing telecom battery would also be removed and replaced. The temporary grid antenna and coax cable would be removed after the new antennas have been fully tested and integrated into the new 8-GHz radio.

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
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

September 1, 2022

Date

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: Franklin and Red Mountain Radio Station Upgrades

Project Site Description

The Franklin radio station is located at BPA's Franklin Substation in Pasco, Franklin County, Washington. The site is within Section 11, Township 9 North, Range 27 East. The substation is adjacent to US Highway 12 East and the surrounding area is a mix of agricultural, industrial and residential land use. The immediate area surrounding the towers is graveled and devoid of vegetation.

The Red Mountain radio station is located at BPA's Red Mountain Substation near West Richland, Benton County, Washington. The site is within Section 27, Township 9 North, Range 30 East. The substation is adjacent to State Route 224 Northeast and the surrounding area is a mix of agricultural and residential land use. The immediate area surrounding the tower is graveled and devoid of vegetation.

There are no wetlands or waterbodies at, or near, either of the sites.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA's cultural staff determined that the project would have no potential to affect historical or cultural resources. The project would not involve any ground disturbance, and the replacement antennas would not substantially change the existing view shed.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not involve ground disturbing activities; therefore, there would be no effects to geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no special-status plant species present within the project areas. The project areas are devoid of vegetation.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: There are no special-status wildlife species likely to be present within the project areas. The project areas are fenced and do not provide good quality habitat.

Notes: If any active nests are found on the radio towers prior to construction, the construction would be delayed until the nests are unoccupied.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no water bodies, floodplains or fish present within the project areas.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands present within the project areas; therefore, there would be no effects to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not involve ground-disturbing activities; therefore, there would be no effects to groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not involve any land use changes. All work would occur at existing BPA facilities.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The antenna replacements would not alter the visual quality of the landscape.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

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

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise would not change substantially.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During project activities, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Project activities would not impact human health or safety. The installation of the lathways safety climbing systems on the towers, would improve overall safety for tower maintenance workers.

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: N/A

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: The project would occur at BPA facilities and would not require landowner involvement.

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
Environmental Protection Specialist

September 1, 2022
Date