

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: PacifiCorp Substation Expansion at Hood River Substation (*Update to previous CX issued on October 26, 2020*)

Project No.: LURR-19910274

Project Manager: Harley Canaday, TERR-3

Location: Hood River County, Oregon

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

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow Pacific Power and Light Company (PacifiCorp) to expand its Tucker Substation, which is located within BPA's Hood River Substation on BPA fee-owned property in Hood River, Hood River County, Oregon. To provide increased electrical transmission capacity, the eastern portion of the substation yard would be expanded by approximately 6,500 square feet (0.15 acre) to accommodate a new prefabricated metal control house and additional electrical equipment. This CX has been updated to reflect a change in the location of the new transmission structure from what was initially proposed by PacifiCorp.

Expanding the substation yard would require excavating to a depth of up to 3 feet and installing grounding, concrete foundations for the new structures, and conduit. The full extent of the substation yard would be graded flat, covered in crushed rock, and enclosed by security fencing. The new control house, measuring 18 feet by 27 feet by 12 feet would be gray in color and would have a downward-facing security light at each of the two entrances. PacifiCorp would also install three 69-kV breakers with associated bus work. An approximately 60-foot-tall monopole structure would be installed south of the existing substation yard in a graveled vehicle parking area.

Construction crews would access the project site via existing access roads, and no new access roads are proposed. If possible, all vehicle, equipment, and materials staging would remain within the existing substation yard or in previously disturbed areas. The existing PacifiCorp-owned electrical equipment and building would remain, and there would be no modifications to the BPA-owned electrical equipment or building.

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/ Walker Stinnette

Walker Stinnette

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer

July 7, 2023

Date

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: PacifiCorp Substation Expansion at Hood River Substation (Update to previous CX issued on October 26, 2020)

Project Site Description

The project site is located entirely on BPA fee-owned property at BPA's Hood River Substation in Hood River, Hood River County, Oregon (Section 2, Township 2 North, Range 10 East). PacifiCorp operates and maintains electrical substation equipment (referred to by PacifiCorp as Tucker Substation) within a portion of the larger BPA-owned Hood River Substation. The project site includes a portion of Tucker Substation, as well as an area outside of the substation that is maintained as right-of-way (ROW) for a PacifiCorp-owned 69-kV transmission line. The fenced substation yard is covered in crushed rock with little to no vegetation, while the ROW consists of regularly mowed native and non-native herbaceous species. Land use in the surrounding area is primarily agricultural, with scattered commercial properties and rural residences along Tucker Road at the eastern boundary of the property. According to the National Hydrography Dataset, National Wetland Inventory, and U.S. Geological Survey topographic maps, there are no wetlands or waterbodies within 0.25 mile of the project site. Soil survey data from the Natural Resources Conservation Service indicates that the project site is underlain by Wind River fine sandy loam, which is not hydric.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA completed background research and an intensive pedestrian survey of the area of potential effect (APE). On May 18, 2020, BPA initiated National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 consultation with the following parties:

- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
- Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon
- Nez Perce Tribe
- Oregon Heritage: State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

A review of the Oregon SHPO online database identified five previously recorded cultural investigations and no historic properties within one mile of the APE. The pedestrian survey similarly found no archaeological resources within the APE. The BPA Hood River Substation was built in 1946, and the control house was built in 1969 in the utilitarian style. Although the substation is considered historic, it has been determined ineligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Furthermore, the proposed activities would be contained to the PacifiCorp Tucker Substation portion of the property, and there

would be no alterations to the BPA Hood River Substation. Therefore, BPA has determined that the proposed actions would result in No Effect to Historic Properties (BPA CR Project No.: OR 2020 055; SHPO Case No.: 20-0736). SHPO concurred with BPA's determination on October 13, 2020. No other comments were received.

On June 30, 2023, BPA determined that implementation of PacifiCorp's amended request to install the transmission structure south of the Tucker Substation yard would have No Potential to Cause Effects to Historic Properties.

Should any cultural resources be discovered during project activities, then all project work must stop, and the Environmental Protection Specialist should be notified immediately.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Geology and soils within and around the project site were previously disturbed during construction of the existing substation and the adjacent Bonneville Road and Tucker Road. Expanding the substation yard would require excavating up to three feet deep to install grounding and foundations. The expanded substation yard would be covered in crushed rock, which would result in a permanent loss of soil productivity in an area measuring approximately 6,500 square feet (0.15 acre). Minor soil compaction could also occur due to vehicle and equipment use.

PacifiCorp and/or its contractors would implement best management practices (BMPs) to address temporary erosion and sediment control. A Certified Erosion and Sediment Control Specialist or Certified Professional in Sediment and Erosion Control would provide input in erosion and sediment control planning. Excavated soils would be stored temporarily on-site, and then used for backfill, deposited on-site, or appropriately disposed of off-site.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: Approximately 6,500 square feet (0.15 acre) of herbaceous vegetation and potentially one conifer would be permanently cleared for the substation expansion. Following completion of the project, the energized substation yard would be permanently maintained clear of vegetation. Additional construction-related activities (e.g., vehicle and equipment use, staging, structure installation, and fence construction) could result in removal of vegetative cover in small areas.

There are no documented occurrences of any state special-status plant species or plant species protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) near the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would result in no impact to protected plant species.

Note: PacifiCorp and/or its contractors would implement the following BMPs to address the spread of noxious weeds:

- Avoid spreading excavated soils off-site. Excavated soils would be used for backfill, deposited on-site, or appropriately disposed of off-site.
- Clean all vehicles and equipment prior to arriving at the project site and as soon as possible after leaving to minimize the introduction and spread of weeds during and after construction.
- Control noxious weeds in construction work areas manually, mechanically, and/or chemically as recommended for each species prior to construction, if needed.
- Obtain crushed rock and other fill material from sources with proof of weed-free certification that meets or exceeds North American Invasive Species Management Association (NAISMA) certification standards.

- Revegetate disturbed areas outside of the energized substation yard with native seed mix, if revegetation is required. Only native seed mixes with proof of weed-free certification that meets or exceeds NAISMA certification standards would be used.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary disruption of normal wildlife behavior could occur from elevated noise and human presence during construction. However, current ambient noise and disturbances are high in the area due to operations and maintenance activities at the substation and due to activities associated with surrounding land uses. As such, many wildlife species that could be present in the area would likely already be habituated to human activity.

There are no nearby documented occurrences of any state special-status wildlife species or wildlife species protected under the Federal ESA, and no such species or suitable habitat are expected to occur at the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would result in no impact to protected wildlife species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project site is not in or near any waterbodies or floodplains, and there are no documented occurrences of any state special-status or ESA-listed fish or fish habitat near the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would result in no impact to these resources.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present within or near the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would result in no impact to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: It is unlikely that soil excavation would be deep enough to affect groundwater or aquifers, if present. Therefore, the proposed project would have no impact on groundwater or aquifers.

PacifiCorp and/or its contractors would implement BMPs to reduce the potential for inadvertent spills of hazardous materials that could enter groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction would occur exclusively on BPA fee-owned property, in an area that is currently managed as a substation and transmission line right-of-way. The substation expansion would be consistent with current land use. No specially-designated areas are in the project vicinity.

PacifiCorp would be responsible for ensuring that the final substation design complies with all state and local development ordinances, if applicable.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The footprint of the substation would expand, and an additional control house with downward-facing security lights and electrical equipment would be added to the expanded substation yard. Also, a new structure would be added outside of the substation. Although this would represent a perceptible change in the appearance of the substation and surrounding land, it would be consistent with the existing land use and visual quality of the area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction-related activities would result in a temporary increase in dust and emissions in the local area. There would be no long-term changes in air quality following completion of the project.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Current ambient noise is typical of an energized substation yard. During construction, use of vehicles, machinery, and equipment and general construction activities would temporarily increase noise above current ambient conditions during daylight hours. However, operational noise would not significantly increase above current ambient conditions.

PacifiCorp would be responsible for ensuring that the final substation design complies with all state and local noise ordinances, if applicable.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not create conditions that would increase risk to human health and safety. PacifiCorp would be responsible for ensuring that the project site is adequately secured when construction crews are not present. Construction crews would follow appropriate safety precautions for working in an electrical substation yard. No impacts to human health and safety are expected as a result of project activities.

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 site is on BPA fee-owned property. No landowner notification, involvement, or coordination would be required.

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

Signed: /s/ Walker Stinnette July 7, 2023
Walker Stinnette, ECT-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist