

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Columbia Substation Transformer Bank 1

Project No.: P02400

Project Manager: Jay Chester – TEPS-TPP-1

Location: Douglas, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.7 Electronic Equipment, B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to remove, replace, upgrade, and/or modify outdated equipment at Columbia Substation. BPA would perform the following tasks: replace transformer bank 1, breakers, instrument transformers, relays, station service, ground grid, perimeter and interior fence, and install new oil containment system inside and outside the perimeter fence. Ground disturbance inside the yard would consist of adding and removing equipment footings, adding electrical conduits and grounding cables, transformer and breaker oil containment systems and associated drainage, and approximately 5,280 LF of perimeter and internal fence replacement. Installation outside of the perimeter fence would be less than 0.1 acres of ground disturbance and would include new oil water separators, coalescing plate separator and outfall. Equipment staging would be located inside the yard and outside the northwest gate adjacent to the new vault installation.

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/ Adrienne Wojtasz

Adrienne Wojtasz

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer Date: February 26, 2024

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

CC:

J. Almcrantz – EPI-4

A. Wojtasz – EPR-BELL-1

J. Chester – TEPS-TPP-1

V. Connell – TERR-PASCO

Official File – EP (EQ-15-CX)

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(NEPA)\CX\Columbia Transfer Bank 1\CX_Columbia Transformer Bank 1_Determination_B_Sept 2022.docx

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: Columbia Substation Transformer Bank 1

Project Site Description

The project would occur at existing BPA Columbia Substation on BPA fee-owned property in Douglas County, Washington. Most of the proposed actions, including any material laydown or equipment staging, would occur within the existing footprint of the fences substation yard which has been heavily disturbed and consists of electrical yard rock that is maintained clear of vegetation. New oil containment vaults and outfall would be located on the Northwest corner of the substation outside the perimeter fence. No wetlands or waterbodies are present within 500 feet of the project site. Outside the substation yard, the surrounding area is primarily characterized by agricultural land use interspersed with isolated, undeveloped grasslands.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: A BPA archaeologist conducted National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 consultation with the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, and Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). BPA determined that implementation of the proposed activities would result in no adverse effect to historic properties (BPA CR project # WA 2021 111). DAHP concurred with BPA's determination on January 18, 2024. No additional comments were received from other consulting parties within 30 days.

Notes:

- Prior to ground disturbing construction a buffered cultural resources sensitive area would be temporarily fenced for avoidance.
- During construction, the Contractor would maintain a copy of BPA's *Post-Review Discovery Procedures* and follow these procedures in the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during project implementation. Work would be halted in the vicinity of the find until it could be inspected and assessed by a BPA archaeologist and in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Localized ground and soil disturbance would occur during construction in the existing yard. Installation of the new footings and oil containment liner may involve limited excavation into native soils below the substation select fill and yard rock, and the project could generate excess material beyond what could be used as backfill. Any excess spoils generated during project activities shall be hauled off site to an approved location.

Notes: The following minimization measures would be implemented.

- During construction, all appropriate Best Management Practices (BMP) would be used to implement site specific erosion and sediment control. All disturbed areas would be stabilized and seeded with approved seed mix outside the perimeter fence.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed work would occur within the existing substation yard, which is maintained clear of vegetation and immediate surrounding areas. No known Federal/State special-status plants are present in the project area. The work area outside the fence would be restored to pre-project condition.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed work would occur within the existing substation yard and immediate surrounding area. The project would have minimal impact to wildlife and habitat related to temporary disturbance associated with ground disturbance, elevated noise, and human presence. The project would have no effect to ESA-listed species. No impacts to state special-status species or habitats are anticipated.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Proposed work would occur within the existing substation yard and immediate surrounding area, and no water bodies, floodplains, or fish-bearing streams are present. Therefore, the proposed would not impact water bodies and floodplains and would have no effect on special-status fish species or habitats.

Notes: The following minimization measures would be implemented to prevent sediment or contaminants from reaching any waterbodies.

- Erosion control measures would be implemented to prevent sedimentation or dust.
- Appropriately stocked spill response kits would be located on vehicles and/or staged onsite.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All proposed work would occur within the existing substation yard and the surrounding area and no wetlands are present.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground excavation for footings and oil containment installation would not reach groundwater depth below the substation yard. Standard construction Best Management Practices (BMPs) would reduce the potential for inadvertent spills of hazardous materials that could contaminate groundwater or aquifers. No new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers are proposed. The project includes adding oil containment around transformers that would capture oil in the event of equipment failure or spill and minimize any potential for impact to groundwater in the future. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action is consistent with current land uses and the project site is not located in a specially-designated area. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact land use or specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be limited visual changes to the project area or surrounding environment. The completed work with the new fence and security enhancement may be noticeable but would constitute a small overall change to the current visual state

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction activities have the potential to result in minor and temporary increases in dust and emissions in the local area. Standard erosion and sediment controls would be implemented, as needed. There would be no change to air quality from existing conditions once construction is complete.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project site is in a rural area surrounded by groves and other electric transmission lines and equipment. The activities in the substation yard would be consistent with routine operation and maintenance of an electrical facility. During construction, use of vehicles and equipment, and other general construction activities, could temporarily and intermittently produce noise at levels higher than current conditions. There would be no change in ambient noise from existing conditions once construction is complete.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All standard safety protocols would be followed throughout project construction, and standard construction BMPs would minimize risk to human, health, and safety. Therefore, the proposed action would not be expected to impact human, health, and 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: 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 area is on BPA fee-owned land, with no adjacent residences nearby that would warrant notification.

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

Signed: /s/ Adrienne Wojtasz

Adrienne Wojtasz
Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: February 26, 2024