

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Wautoma Substation Security Enhancement

**Project No.:** P04961

**Project Manager:** Micaiah Watkins, TEPF-CSB-2

**Location:** Yakima County, WA

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B1.11 Fencing and B2.2 Building and equipment instrumentation

**Description of the Proposed Action:** BPA proposes to replace existing perimeter fences with improved security fencing at the Wautoma Substation. The Wautoma Substation is located in Yakima County, Washington. The proposed work would support BPA's compliance with North American Electric Reliability Corporation-Critical Information Protection (NERC-CIP) standards, and protects critical assets from theft, vandalism, and terrorism.

The existing seven-foot-tall fences would be removed from in-ground concrete curbing or would be removed along with individual post foundations where there is no curbing. Eight-foot-tall cut-and climb-resistant steel-mesh security fences topped with razor wire would be installed. In addition to the increased height, security would be enhanced by a near 40% reduction in visibility through the fence, impeding target acquisition by an attacker outside of the perimeter. New gates would be installed in some locations. The existing concrete curbing supporting sections of fence would be left in place except where the concrete would affect the levelness or performance of the new fence. In the instances where it is determined that new holes for fence post footings would need to be dug, they would be no more than 54-inches deep and approximately 30-inches wide.

The new security fences would be in the same location as the existing fence around the perimeter of the substations with minor exceptions where improved design or added features require small alterations of existing fence location (i.e., new equipment, elimination of unused gates, or variations in layout for improved camera coverage). The disturbance for expansion construction would be limited to the BPA transmission facility boundaries in which vegetation growth is regularly managed by mechanical and chemical means.

Several tall poles ("security poles"), averaging about 23 feet in height, would host cameras. The cameras that would be installed would be mounted on arm brackets sufficient to get clear line-of-sight along the fence line. They would be installed just inside the fence perimeter and elsewhere as appropriate for coverage and would require footings up to six-feet deep. The cameras would provide an integrated perimeter intrusion detection system that would monitor and assess activity in and around the substation. The system would have the capability to detect movement near the perimeter as well as fence breaching, providing alarm information, and images at the exact location of movement or intrusion attempt.

To incorporate the controls for the systems, a security communications rack may be installed in the control house at Wautoma Substation. A two-foot-wide, three-foot-deep trench may be excavated to run conduit across the substation yards from the control houses to the nearest fence lines if wireless connections are not used. If a drilled hole is required for communication wires in the substations' control houses, the holes would be limited to three inches in diameter and would be located to minimize visibility.

This project would also include additional fencing segments on the exterior west side of the substation constructed of salvaged 7-foot high fencing to catch tumbleweeds. BPA substation personnel would then manage disposing of the tumbleweeds.

**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.

Christopher H. Furey  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Sarah T. Biegel  
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:** Wautoma Substation Security Enhancement

## **Project Site Description**

The project site consists of the BPA Wautoma Substation and some adjacent land in Yakima County, WA. The site is approximately 15 miles northwest of Sunnyside, WA, 15 miles south of Mattawa, WA, and 32 miles east of the City of Yakima, WA. The surrounding topography consists of rolling dry land and a few irrigated parcels using circle irrigation, and some limited rural development. The surrounding area is generally very dry without irrigation and no USFWS delineated wetlands were identified within 5,000 feet of the substation. An unnamed intermittent stream appears over 700 feet south of the substation. The Hanford Nuclear Reservation is several miles east of the substation, and the Columbia River is about 7.7 miles north of the substation.

## **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The BPA archaeologist reviewed the proposed activities and determined that these activities at the project area for the installation of the fencing and gates do not have potential to cause effects to historic or cultural resources.

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minimal soil disturbance for installation of this security enhancement project. Some digging is expected to establish several of the new fence post locations. All work would be at the established substation property and for short distances outside the substation yards. The area outside the substation is dry with limited to no vegetation except for some small weeds and tumbleweeds.

Notes:

- Where possible, leave roots intact in vegetation-cover removal operations. Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be implemented to limit soil transport by wind and water. Work should occur during the summer dry season or during a period when the southern boundary is still dry.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would be occurring in the BPA substation perimeter that is currently managed for low-growing vegetation. There are no listed or special-status species present.

Some brush would be cleared where needed for construction and for long-term security monitoring.

Notes:

- Re-seed any cleared area with a BPA-approved mix of native low-growing species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would be at the BPA Wautoma Substation and the surrounding perimeter. No trees would be removed, and the site is not identified to provide northern spotted owl habitat or nesting sites. Construction of the fences and gates is expected to occur during daytime hours at the substation with limited to no effect to any listed or special-status species.

Notes:

- Utilize applicable BMPs to limit wind and water erosion of soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The Columbia River is over 7 miles north of the substation. An unnamed intermittent stream that is typically dry is located over 700 feet south of the substation. There would be no in-water work occurring and construction would not be near the Columbia River and would avoid the intermittent stream to the south.

Notes:

- Use applicable BMPs to limit wind and water erosion of soils to water bodies. Reinforce exposed soils and seed them with an appropriate and native soil-stabilizing soil mix suitable to dry environments. Develop a Fugitive Dust Control Plan.

#### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetland areas are nearby the substation and the surrounding area is very dry. No delineated wetlands are located within 5,000 feet of the substation and an unnamed stream is over 700 feet south of the substation.

#### **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not impact groundwater or aquifers. Infiltration to groundwater and aquifers would not be adversely impacted by the construction.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would take place around BPA substation property consistent with activities at large substations without impact to any 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 fences and other substation security enhancements may be noticeable but would constitute a small overall change to the current visual states.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions would occur during installation. Dust would be kept to a minimum in adhering to BMPs for ground-disturbing actions as noted in the Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish section above. There would be small, sporadic increases in machine exhaust during periods of active work along the fence perimeter.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours. No ongoing noise increase.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Workers on the project would be required to follow all applicable state and/or Federal safety standards as the majority of work would occur from inside the substation grounds, and if work occurs outside, access to the other active work sites would be controlled and monitored. In addition, the proposed work furthers BPA's compliance with NERC-CIP standards and protects critical assets to help provide for a safe and reliable network for the region.

### **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: BPA Transmission will be in coordination with BPA Realty for this project. .

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

Signed:

Christopher H. Furey  
Environmental Protection Specialist