

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Verizon Rocky Flats Antenna Upgrade (update to previous CX issued on July 15, 2019)

Project Manager: Jonathan Toobian – TEPF-CSB-2

Location: Klickitat County, WA

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 allow Verizon to upgrade their antennas and equipment at an existing site called Rocky Flats. The site is located on BPA's transmission tower, along the McNary-Ross-1 transmission line, in Klickitat County, Washington.

This is an update to the previous CX that was issued on July 15, 2019. This CX has been updated to reflect minor changes to the project scope. The current proposal includes removal of nine existing wireless antennas on the structure and replacing those with nine new wireless antennas. Additionally, six remote radio units would be removed, rather than three. One voltage protection device would also be removed and replaced with a new voltage protection device. Nine coaxial cables would be removed and two new coaxial cables would be installed to connect the new antennas to the equipment in Verizon's equipment compound beneath the tower.

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.

Beth Belanger
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

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.

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Project Site Description

The proposed project is in Klickitat County, Washington, near the town of Lyle, Washington. The site is in Section 28, Township 3 North, Range 12 East. The majority of the host parcel is used as rangeland for cattle. The neighboring parcels are largely undeveloped, except for sporadic residential housing. The surrounding topography consists of undulating hills. Balch Lake is 0.25 miles south and the Columbia River is a mile south of the project location.

Vegetation at the site consists of Gray's biscuitroot (*Lomatium grayi*), barestem desert parsley (*Lomatium nudicaule*), scorpion weed (*Phacelia hastata*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), storksbill (*Erodium cicutarium*) and unidentified grasses.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA Cultural staff have reviewed the proposed project and determined that this type of activity does not have the potential to cause effects to historic or cultural properties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project does not involve ground disturbance. Some insignificant compaction of soils may occur due to bucket trucks driving around the site.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal or state special-status plant species or habitats present at the project location. The project would have no impacts to special-status plants.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal or state special-status wildlife species or habitats are present at the project location. The project would have no impacts to special-status wildlife.

Notes:

- If any active nests are found on the structure prior to construction, the construction would be delayed until the nest is unoccupied.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area does not have any water bodies, floodplains, or listed fish species; therefore, there would be no impacts to these resources.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is not in or near wetlands; therefore, there would be no impact to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project does not involve any ground disturbance; therefore, there would be no impact to groundwater and aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The land use at the site would not change. The project area is zoned for small scale agriculture within the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA). On May 30, 2019, a CRGNSA information submittal was sent to the US Forest Service (USFS) CRGNSA office for review. The USFS responded on July 2, 2019, that no further review was needed. BPA contacted USFS on October 7, 2024, to determine if the slight modifications in project scope would require a revised information submittal. USFS responded on October 8, 2024, that no further review was needed. The project would have no impacts on land use or specially designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In the spring of 2019, an assessment of potential impacts to CRGNSA Key Viewing Areas (KVA) was conducted. The antennas would not be visible from any of the KVAs due to the distance and topography between. The wireless antennas and equipment are consistent with the existing use of the utility corridor and would not impact visual quality. The minor changes to the scope would not change the initial assessment.

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 significant 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.
Operation noise would not change.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no impact to 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 proponent is responsible for acquiring and maintaining easements for their facilities from underlying landowners. They are also responsible for coordinating construction activities with the underlying landowners.

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

Signed:

Beth Belanger
Environmental Protection Specialist