

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: AT&T Telecommunications Upgrade at East Lake Stevens

Project Manager: Jonathan Toobian – TELP-TPP-3

Location: Snohomish County, 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 allow AT&T to upgrade its existing telecommunications facility located on a BPA-owned transmission structure (14/5) on the Monroe-Custer No. 1 transmission line near Lake Stevens, Snohomish County, Washington. The work would include removing six existing tower mounted amplifiers (TMAs) and installing six new TMAs, removing six existing panel antennas and installing six new panel antennas, and upgrading antenna sector mounts. To ensure safety, BPA workers and their subcontractors would complete the equipment removal and installation on the transmission structure.

In addition to upgrading equipment on the transmission structure, removal and installation of ground level telecommunications equipment, including diplexers, remote radio units, breakers, and converter modules, would occur in AT&T's fenced equipment area underneath the transmission structure on privately-owned property within BPA's easement.

The project would not involve any ground excavation or grading and would use established access roads and work areas.

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/ W. Walker Stinnette

W. Walker Stinnette
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient CRGT

Reviewed by:

/s/ Carol P. Leiter

Carol P. Leiter
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Date: December 3, 2019

Katey Grange
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: AT&T Telecommunications Upgrade at East Lake Stevens

Project Site Description

The project site consists of an existing AT&T telecommunications facility collocated on a BPA-owned steel lattice electrical transmission structure (14/5 on the Monroe-Custer No. 1 transmission line) near Lake Stevens, Snohomish County, Washington (Section 4, Township 29 N, Range 6 East). Access to the site is via an approximately 75-foot-long gravel access road from 137th Avenue NE. Vehicle access to the site is restricted by a locked gate near 137th Avenue NE.

AT&T telecommunications equipment is mounted on the top of the approximately 130-foot-tall transmission structure. AT&T maintains additional equipment mounted on a concrete pad underneath the transmission structure on privately-owned land. The project site is immediately surrounded by a maintained electrical transmission right-of-way, with low-growing native and non-native herbaceous and shrub species. Patches of vegetation can be found within portions of the gravel access road. Outside of the right-of-way, land use is primarily characterized by rural residential development interspersed with areas of forested land. The closest wetlands mapped by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, National Wetland Inventory are located over 500 feet east of the project site. The closest surface water body is Little Pilchuck Creek, which is located over 1,500 feet west of the project site.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> As no soil excavation would occur as a result of the project, and minor additive features do not adversely impact the integrity of historic transmission infrastructure, BPA has determined that the project has No Potential to Effect historic properties.</p>		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Geology and soils within and around the project site were previously disturbed during construction of BPA's transmission infrastructure, AT&T's telecommunications facility, and the access road. Although the proposed project would use established access roads and work areas and would not involve any ground excavation, minor soil compaction could occur due to the use of vehicles and equipment around the project site.</p>		
3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Project-related activities (e.g. vehicle and equipment use) could cause removal of vegetative cover in small areas where vegetation is present. No additional tree or vegetation removal is proposed. There are no documented occurrences of any state special-status plant species or plant species projected under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) near the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would have no effect on protected plant species.</p>		

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



Explanation: There are three documented bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) occurrences within three miles of the project site. Minor and temporary disruption of normal wildlife behavior could occur from elevated noise and human presence during project implementation. However, wildlife species that may be present in the area are likely already habituated to human activity, including vehicle traffic and other activities associated with rural residential development. There are no documented occurrences of any other 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 have no effect on protected wildlife species.

If any active nests are found on the steel-lattice transmission structure, the project would be delayed until the nests are unoccupied.

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



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 have no impact on these resources.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: No wetlands are present within or near the project site. The project would use established access roads and work areas, and no ground excavation is proposed. Therefore, the proposed project would have no impact on wetlands.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: The project would not involve any ground excavation. Therefore, the proposed project would have no impact on groundwater and aquifers.

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



Explanation: There would be no change in land use at the project site. No specially-designated areas are in the project vicinity.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: There would be no change in visual quality at the project site. The final configuration of structure-mounted and ground level equipment would be consistent with the existing use of the site as a telecommunications facility.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Temporary and minor dust and vehicle emissions would increase in the local area from vehicle and equipment use during project implementation. There would be no long-term changes in air quality following completion of the project.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Project-related noise would be minor and temporary and would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise would not change from current ambient conditions.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: The project would not generate or use hazardous materials and would not create conditions that would increase risk to human health and safety. 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, if necessary:

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: The transmission structure is owned by BPA. AT&T is responsible for acquiring and maintaining easements for their facilities from underlying landowners.

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

Signed: /s/ W. Walker Stinnette Date: December 3, 2019
W. Walker Stinnette – ECT-4
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient CRGT