

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Cabbage Hill Radio Station VHF Radio System Upgrade

Project No.: P01237

Project Manager: Molly Kovaka, TEP-CSB-2

Location: Umatilla County, OR

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.19 Microwave, meteorological, and radio towers

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA is proposing to replace the aging VHF radio system at its Cabbage Hill Radio Station in Umatilla County, Oregon with a modern VHF radio system. The replacement would help improve two-way field radio voice coverage across BPA's service area and is coordinated with similar efforts at many VHF stations under BPA's "Mobile-REDI" program.

The existing interior communications rack would be replaced and fitted with new equipment including a fuse panel. A new battery system would be installed and the old one disposed of per hazardous material handling guidelines. The power supply breaker system would be replaced to accommodate the newly configured equipment racks.

Adjacent to an existing 3-by-2 port array, two new five-inch diameter ports would be installed through the exterior wall to host new coaxial cabling for transmitting the VHF antenna signal from the lattice steel tower to the control house. A new, short (two-to-three feet) ice bridge (a steel frame protective overhang) extension would be installed to protect and support the cabling. Two 20-foot-tall, three-inch-diameter VHF rod antennas would be installed on the lattice tower.

Lastly, new VHF radios ('repeaters') would be installed in the communication building and connected to the antennas and coaxial cable. All old equipment would be retired from the site and either disposed of or returned to inventory for spares or parts.

Work would be conducted in phases over a two-year period, starting in the Spring of 2019.

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, July 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/ Michael J. O'Connell
Michael J. O'Connell
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel
Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: February 26, 2019

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.

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Project Site Description

Located on private property within the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), the Cabbage Hill Radio Station sits on a grassy, gently-sloped hilltop with coniferous trees occupying draws around the open grass. There is a complex of communication sites visible around the BPA station. It is nearly one-half mile to surface water (a creek).

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> The BPA historian determined the project would have no potential to cause effects to historic properties. The antennas would be added to an existing array in an established radio station and there would be no ground disturbance. BPA provided the CTUIR visual impact information upon request. The CTUIR responded with no concerns regarding the BPA plan at the radio station primarily because the plan would not include additional external lighting.</p>		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> There would be no ground-disturbing work.</p>		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> All travel would be on established access roads and all work would occur inside the denuded, fenced station yard. No plants, including special-status species, would be affected.</p>		
4. Wildlife (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> Gray wolves are federally listed as endangered in Oregon in lands to the west of the station; however, no impacts to wildlife, including special-status species, would be expected as a result of the project. Though the level of activity and noise would rise above typical maintenance projects at the site, the presence of Interstate 84 just 0.3 miles away would make the banging of metal tower members for antenna equipment installation a relatively non-invasive noise. Additionally, with the presence of several operating radio facilities at the site, human activities would not rise noticeably above typical levels.</p>		
5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish (including federal/state special-status species and ESUs)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Explanation:</u> There would be no impact to aquatic resources or aquatic species. Ground would not be disturbed and since work would take place one half-mile from surface water, inadvertent spills would be mitigated by distance.</p>		

6. **Wetlands**

Explanation: There are no wetlands in the access route or at the radio station site.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**

Explanation: Groundwater and aquifers are not going to be affected. There would be no ground disturbance to directly access these resources, and the project does not involve hazardous liquid materials.

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

Explanation: The hill on which the station is situated also hosts multiple communication facilities, and since the radio station has been in operation since 1970, there would be no impact to land use or specially-designated areas of the CTUIR.

9. **Visual Quality**

Explanation: The two rod antennas would not add substantially to the overall tower presence in the viewshed. At only three inches in diameter, they would diminish in visibility rather quickly moving away from the tower. Key scenic views or culturally sensitive areas in the vicinity would be far enough removed to incur no impact from the change. Addition of the short ice bridge spur would be angled off the existing bridge at about eight feet in height. There would be only a slight change to the visual appearance to an observer outside the fence.

10. **Air Quality**

Explanation: There would be no impact to air quality aside from limited duration vehicle exhaust during work access and egress along established routes.

11. **Noise**

Explanation: There would be temporary increases in localized noise around work activities to take place in the station yard and the building. It would be expected that noise levels would remain within the normal range expected for manual activities that would be performed on metal structures.

12. **Human Health and Safety**

Explanation: Public health and safety would not be impacted from the work that would be localized to restricted radio station grounds. Health and safety of construction personnel would not be adversely impacted as OSHA or BPA safety guidelines would be followed. BPA employee safety during subsequent regional field operations should benefit from the project through better coverage and reliability of the two-way radio communication network.

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 Cabbage Hill Radio Station is a PacifiCorp-owned facility on privately-owned land in the CTUIR. BPA has an agreement in place with PacifiCorp obligating both parties to specific actions to accomplish the upgrades.

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

Signed: /s/ Michael J. O'Connell
Michael J. O'Connell, ECT-4

Date: February 26, 2019