

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Ruppert Road Tap

Project No.: L0414

Project Manager: Tom Pender - TEPF-CSB-2

Location: Benton County, Washington

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

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to interconnect a new Benton Rural Electric Association substation (Ruppert Road Substation) at a new tap point on BPA's existing Red Mountain-White Bluffs 115-kV transmission line along Ruppert Road in Benton County, Washington. To install the new tap, BPA would remove and replace single-pole wood structures 2/6 and 2/7, and add a new structure between these two structures. Adding a new structure would then cause the renumbering of remaining transmission line structures ahead on line. Two steel switch structures would also be built about 14 feet back-on-line from the new structure 2/7 and 14 feet ahead-on-line from structure 2/8 (previously 2/7).

The new and replaced structure(s) would be 70 to 75 feet high. Structure 2/6 would become a two-pole wood H-frame. Both the new structure (renumbered as 2/7) and the replaced 2/8 (previously 2/7) would become triple-pole wood H-frames. Poles would be direct embedded into the ground. The new steel switch structures would be about 18 feet high. Their four plate footings are set in two excavated trenches (about 4 feet wide and 14 feet long); then back-filled with the excavated material. Any excess material from the poles or switch structures would be used on the existing right-of-way to help bury the required counterpoise for each structure and/or spread thinly on the right-of-way.

The actual tap into the Ruppert Road Substation would be positioned on the conductors between structures 2/7 and 2/8. BPA would also install a meter within the control house of the new Ruppert Road Substation.

All work and the placement of new and replaced structures and switches would be within the existing right-of-way. No new access roads would be needed for this project.

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/ Carol Leiter

Carol Leiter, ECT-4
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Date: March 19, 2020

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.

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Project Site Description

The project site is located in Benton County, Washington, just north of Ruppert Road where the existing BPA Red Mountain – White Bluffs 115-kV transmission line crosses Ruppert Road (T10N, R27E, Section 35). Crop circles surround the site to the north, east, and west, and Ruppert Road, a two-lane country road, borders the site to the south. Because of heavy agricultural use and rotating crop circles, the site is completely level and soils are loose and sandy with scattered weeds. There are no waterbodies or wetlands near the project area.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
<p>1. Historic and Cultural Resources</p> <p><u>Explanation:</u> A BPA historian and contract archaeologist reviewed the area of potential affect and a recent cultural resource survey conducted in this area for the new Benton REA substation, and determined that no historic properties would be affected.</p> <p><u>Note:</u> Treat potential discoveries of archaeological materials with the inadvertent discovery guidelines: stop work, contact the BPA EP lead (see cover memo for contact information) and/or the BPA ECC archaeologist for further required notifications, and ensure integrity of site and materials until further instructions are given.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>2. Geology and Soils</p> <p><u>Explanation:</u> Sand soil and riverine rock below the soil layer would be disturbed by structure and footing placement, and counterpoise. All excavated material would be backfilled and any excess material would be used to help bury the counterpoise and/or spread thinly within the right-of-way.</p> <p><u>Note:</u> Soils would be stabilized during and after construction to prevent erosion and sedimentation, per the Eastern Washington Stormwater Manual. In the fall, seed would be broadcast and raked in. A layer of hydromulch would then be applied.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>3. Plants (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)</p> <p><u>Explanation:</u> The project site is devoid of vegetation except scattered weeds.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>4. Wildlife (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)</p> <p><u>Explanation:</u> Wildlife that forage in or around the crop circles may temporarily scatter from construction noise and activity but the level of noise and activity is not unlike the same generated by the existing roadway or surrounding agricultural activities.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. **Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish**

(including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)



Explanation: No water bodies, floodplains, or fish occur at or near this location.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: No wetlands exist at or near this location.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: The wood poles (which would be direct-embed) and the plate footings for the switch structures (26"x26") are not large enough to create a barrier to any groundwater flow that may be in the area. No known aquifers exist in the area.

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



Explanation: Utilities are an accepted land use at this location. There are no specially-designated land areas at this location.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The new wood pole structures would be a similar height as the existing structures in this section of the right-of-way. The two new steel switch structures would be an addition on the landscape, but would not be out of character with the utility nature of the existing right-of-way or Benton REA's new substation adjacent to the right-of-way at this location.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Temporary dust would be generated by construction vehicles.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Temporary noise would occur during daylight hours for the duration of construction. Noise levels would not be inconsistent with surrounding agricultural activities and adjacent vehicles along Ruppert Road.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: As all excavated material for the new structures would be backfilled, used for burying counterpoise, or spread on the right-of-way, no material would need to be disposed of. Construction contractors would follow their own safety plans and provide flaggers as required by the county to assure safety for motorists passing on Ruppert Road as construction vehicles enter and exit the roadway.

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: BPA's Customer Service Engineer and Realty Specialist would notify and coordinate the construction schedule with Benton REA and the underlying landowner along the right-of-way. No additional notification is needed.

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

Signed: /s/ Carol Leiter
Carol Leiter, ECT-4

Date: March 19, 2020

Environmental Protection Specialist