

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: MREDI – Merritt Antenna and Radio Equipment Installation

Project Manager: Rian Dustan, TTBP-DITT-2

Location: Chelan 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 upgrade its VHF radio system at the Merritt Radio Station. BPA would install one new VHF whip antenna at the top of the existing 20-foot-tall monopole at the site. The new whip antenna would be used to test the Mobile Redi radio system for the Puget Sound Region and verify that the system functions properly. A new waveguide and coaxial cable would also be installed on the tower to connect the new antenna to indoor equipment. Equipment would be installed within in an existing rack inside the equipment building.

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/ Beth Belanger

Beth Belanger
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Carol Leiter

Carol Leiter

Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange July 9, 2021

Katey C. Grange

Date

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 Merritt Radio Station is in the Wenatchee National Forest, approximately 30 miles northwest of Wenatchee, Washington. It is in Section 2, Township 26 North, Range 16 East. The site is on the east slope of the Cascade Mountain Range, approximately one-mile north of Highway 2. An unnamed stream is located 0.25 miles west of the site. The radio station is approximately 5,400 feet in elevation.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project was reviewed by a BPA archaeologist and it was determined that there is no potential to cause effects to historical or cultural resources.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not require any ground disturbance. There would be no impacts to geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Federal/state special-status species or habitats that would be impacted by the work.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project would produce intermittent noise during antenna installation that may cause temporary disturbance to adjacent wildlife. The project location is in Northern spotted owl designated critical habitat. BPA worked with the underlying landowner, U.S. Forest Service (USFS), to determine that the proposed project is consistent with the USFS's Programmatic Biological Assessment for Forest-wide Low Impact Management Activities. USFS determined that these types of activities have a potential to affect, but not adversely affect spotted owls and/or spotted owl critical habitat, which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) concurred with on May 8, 2019. The Merritt Radio Station upgrades are part of the USFS Special Use Authorization (Permit) Program. Additionally, the USFS District Biologist has determined that the nearest nesting habitat is over 400 meters away from the site.

There are no other Federal/state special-status species or habitats at the site that would be impacted by the project. The site is an existing radio station.

Notes:

- No work to be performed during the spotted owl's critical nesting period from March 1 through July 15.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no water bodies, floodplains, or fish habitats in, or near, the site that would be affected by project activities.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands at, or near, the site that would be impacted by the project.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project does not involve any ground disturbing activities and would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The land use would not change at the site. There are no specially-designated areas near the project location.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The visual quality would be unchanged and would remain consistent with the existing use of the radio station site.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions may occur during construction; however, there would be no significant changes to air quality during or after the projects occur.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise would not change.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During project activities all standard safety protocols would be followed. Project activities would not impact human health or 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 Merritt Radio Station is in a remote location without any adjacent landowners that would need to be notified or coordinated with. BPA has coordinated with the underlying land manager, USFS.

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

Signed: /s/ Beth Belanger July 9, 2021
Beth Belanger – ECT-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC