

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Skamania PUD North Bonneville Substation Expansion

Project No.: LURR-20200344

Project Manager: Charlene R. Belt, TERR-ROSS-MHQA

Location: Skamania County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.11 Electric power substations and interconnection facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow Public Utility District No. 1 of Skamania County (Skamania PUD) to reroute an existing access road, construct a new gravel parking area, and upgrade sectionalizers, switchgear, and distribution feeder lines on BPA fee-owned property near BPA's North Bonneville Substation in Skamania County, Washington. The proposed actions on BPA property are in support of an expansion of Skamania PUD's North Bonneville Substation, which is located entirely on Skamania PUD fee-owned property adjacent to BPA's property. In addition to allowing the construction activities, BPA would also grant a new 15-foot-wide easement to allow Skamania PUD to access their facilities for maintenance and operation.

Expanding Skamania PUD's North Bonneville Substation would require rerouting an existing 15-foot-wide access road around the northwest perimeter of the expanded substation. Skamania PUD would construct a 75-foot-wide gravel parking lot southeast of the substation that would also serve as a materials and equipment staging area during the substation expansion. The new parking area would require the removal of 12 trees located between the proposed parking area and the existing access road. An additional temporary staging area would be established south of the existing access road near Cascade Drive. This additional staging area would not require any site preparations.

The existing switchgear and concrete pad near the intersection of Cascade Drive and the access road would be removed, and the existing underground distribution feeders would be abandoned in place. Skamania PUD would install four new fiberglass sectionalizers mounted on concrete pads near Cascade Drive and would trench and bury four new underground feeders in individual conduits between the sectionalizers and vaults in the expanded substation yard. A new disconnect switch and transformer would be mounted on a new concrete pad immediately north of the expanded substation yard.

To provide temporary backup station service power for BPA's North Bonneville Substation, a temporary overhead transmission line would be installed with three temporary transmission structures: two dead-end structures with anchors and one mid-span structure. The dead-end transmission structure located closest to Skamania PUD's substation would have a temporary structure-mounted transformer.

The work would require use of heavy equipment, including a truck-mounted auger, road grader and compactor, backhoe excavator, dump truck, boom truck, and crane.

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:

<u>/s/ Katey C. Grange</u>	<u>October 14, 2021</u>
Katey C. Grange	Date
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: Skamania PUD North Bonneville Substation Expansion

Project Site Description

The project site is located on BPA fee-owned property near BPA's North Bonneville Substation in North Bonneville, Skamania County, Washington (Township 2 North, Range 7 East, Donation Land Claim 39). Work would occur in the western portion of the property near Skamania PUD's North Bonneville Substation. The project site is primarily within maintained transmission line right-of-way (ROW), which consists of regularly mowed grasses and weeds. Portions of the project site also include existing access roads and a small, isolated stand of coniferous trees. In addition to the BPA and Skamania PUD substations and associated transmission lines, the area surrounding the project site contains private residences (located approximately 500 feet west), Cascade Cemetery (located approximately 50 feet south on the opposite side of Cascade Drive), the BNSF railway, Highway 14, and isolated stands of conifer trees. The project site is underlain by the Bonneville soil series, which is not hydric, and there are no wetlands present. Greenleaf Creek is located approximately 650 feet northwest of the site. All work areas are located within a designated Urban Area of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA).

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On January 29, 2021, BPA initiated National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 consultation with the following parties:

- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
- Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon
- Cowlitz Indian Tribe
- Nez Perce Tribe
- Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP)

BPA determined that the proposed undertaking would result in no adverse effect to historic properties (BPA CR Project No.: WA 2020 239; DAHP Log No.: 2021-01-00532-BPA). Concurrence and a request for an Inadvertent Discovery Plan (IDP) were received from Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon on May 10, 2021. DAHP requested revisions to BPA's determination report on April 23, 2021 and June 29, 2021 and concurred with BPA's revised determination on July 14, 2021. No other comments were received.

Notes:

- Implement an IDP in the unlikely event that cultural material is encountered during the implementation of this project. BPA would require that work be halted in the vicinity of the finds to ensure integrity of the site and materials until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action, including excavating, gravelling, trenching, and operating vehicles and heavy equipment, would cause temporary and permanent soil impacts in areas that have been previously-disturbed. Covering the rerouted access road and new parking area in gravel and installing new foundations would result in a permanent loss of soil productivity. Removing trees, excavating existing foundations, trenching for the new distribution feeder lines, and installing temporary transmission structures installation would temporarily disturb soils. Minor soil compaction would also occur due to vehicle and heavy equipment use and temporary materials and equipment staging. Standard construction best management practices would minimize soil impacts and would prevent erosion and sedimentation.

Notes:

- Test soil and foundations for hazardous materials. If hazardous materials are identified, then excavated soils and foundations would be disposed of off-site according to all local, state, and Federal regulations.
- Reseed disturbed areas with a regionally appropriate native seed mix.
- Ensure that disturbed areas are stabilized (e.g., apply certified weed-free mulch or straw and/or use tackifier when applying seed) until vegetation becomes established.
- Implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan, with associated Erosion and Sediment Control Plan that is guided by Washington Department of Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action, including excavation, gravelling, trenching, and operating vehicles and heavy equipment, would bury, crush, and remove existing grass and weeds within the project site. Skamania PUD would also remove twelve coniferous trees that range in size from 12 inches to 40 inches diameter at breast height. These disturbance areas would be minimal and would be reseeded following completion of construction. There are no documented occurrences of any state special-status plant species or plant species protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) near the project site, and no such species or suitable habitat have been observed at the site. Skamania PUD has discussed the proposed action with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and has determined that there would be no effect on special-status plant species.

Notes:

- Reseed disturbed areas with a regionally appropriate native seed mix.
- Ensure that disturbed areas are stabilized (e.g., apply certified weed-free mulch or straw and/or use tackifier when applying seed) until vegetation becomes established.
- Wash vehicles and equipment prior to mobilization to project sites to remove all soil and vegetative material and prevent the spread of noxious weeds.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary disturbance of wildlife could occur from elevated noise during construction. Current ambient noise and disturbances are high in the area due to operations and maintenance activities at the nearby Skamania PUD and BPA substations. As such, wildlife species that could be present in the area would likely be habituated to human activity. There are no documented occurrences of any state special-status wildlife species or wildlife species protected under the Federal ESA near the project site, and no such species or suitable habitat have been observed at the site. Skamania PUD has discussed the proposed action with the USFWS and has determined that there would be no effect on special-status wildlife species.

Notes:

- Complete a nest survey immediately prior to tree removal if removing trees during the nesting season. If occupied nests are identified, BPA would require that work be halted in the vicinity of the nest until it can be inspected and assessed by BPA.
- Complete tree removal outside of the breeding/nesting season (i.e., between September 1 and December 31), if possible.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Greenleaf Creek, which is located approximately 650 feet from the project site, contains fish species protected under the Federal ESA, including bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*), chum salmon (*Oncorhynchus keta*), coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*), and steelhead trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). Greenleaf is designated critical habitat for steelhead trout, Chinook salmon, chum salmon, and coho salmon. No in-water work is proposed and no project activities would occur within a floodplain. Standard construction best management practices would prevent impacts to off-site water bodies, floodplains, and fish. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact these resources.

Notes:

- Implement a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan, with associated Erosion and Sediment Control Plan, that is guided by Washington Department of Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington.
- Maintain spill response materials onsite during construction to quickly address containment, cleanup, and disposal in the event inadvertent spills.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Skamania PUD conducted a wetland investigation in June 2019, and no wetlands were identified within the project site on BPA property. Standard construction best management practices would prevent impacts to off-site wetlands, if present. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact wetlands.

Notes:

- See Notes in Section 5: Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground disturbance is unlikely to reach depths that would intersect groundwater, and no new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers are proposed. Standard construction

best management practices would prevent impacts to groundwater and aquifers. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

Notes:

- Maintain spill response materials onsite during construction to quickly address containment, cleanup, and disposal in the event inadvertent spills.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would be consistent with current land use. The project site is located entirely within a designated Urban Area of the CRGNSA, which means the project would be exempt from compliance with CRGNSA requirements, including those contained in the CRGNSA Management Plan.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would result in a perceptible change in the appearance of the property, including from rerouting the access road, constructing a new parking area, removing trees and herbaceous vegetation, installing temporary transmission structures, and operating vehicles and equipment. However, these changes would be temporary and/or minor relative to the scale of existing structures and equipment and would be consistent with the existing visual quality of the area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction activities would result in a minor and temporary increase in dust and emissions in the local area. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the proposed action.

Notes:

- Manage dust in compliance with all applicable standards of the Southwest Washington Clean Air Agency (SWCAA).

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During construction, use of vehicles and equipment and general construction activities would create noise above current ambient conditions. Construction-related noise could be audible from Cascade Cemetery and a few private residences near the project site. Noise impacts would be temporary and intermittent and would only occur during daylight hours (approximately 7 AM to 7 PM). There would be no long-term change in ambient noise following completion of the proposed action.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Standard construction best management practices would minimize risk to human health and safety. Therefore, the proposed action would not be expected to impact human health and safety.

Notes:

- Test soil and foundations for hazardous materials. If hazardous materials are identified, then excavated soils and foundations would be disposed of off-site according to all local, state, and Federal regulations.

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: All proposed work would occur on BPA fee-owned property. No landowner notification, involvement, or coordination would be required.

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 Stinnete October 14, 2021
W. Walker Stinnete, EC-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient CRGT