

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Warren Substation Communications Line Installation

PP&A No.: 4,240

Project Manager: Charla Burke TEPS-TPP-1

Location: Columbia County, Oregon

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) is proposing to install a new communications line to the Warren Substation power control assembly (PCA) building. BPA owns and operates the Warren Substation in Columbia County, Oregon. In the spring of 2022 a new PCA building was installed at the substation. The new communications line would provide modern communication services to the PCA building. The communications line would be installed with a combination of trenching and directional boring methods, and would include installing three new small pedestals. The trench would be approximately two feet wide and three feet in depth. Installation would take place along the south side of Church Road, crossing the road to connect with the substation through an underground directional boring immediately west of the substation. The communication line installation would total approximately 550 linear feet.

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/ Aaron Siemers

Aaron Siemers, EPR-4
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange Date: June 3, 2022
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 area is located near the existing Warren Substation in Columbia County, OR, in the Volcanic ecoregion of the Coast Range in northwestern Oregon. The Volcanics ecoregion is underlain by fractured volcanic basalt rock, and contains forests of Douglas fir which are managed primarily for timber harvest. Mountain streams support spring runs of chinook salmon and summer steelhead.

Warren Substation totals approximately 1 acre in size, with the electrical switchyard and perimeter fence encompassing approximately 0.3 acres. The facility is immediately surrounded by rural, single family properties ranging from 1 to several acres in size and is located approximately 3 miles from the town of Warren, OR, which is adjacent to the Columbia River. Church Road, a two lane county road, runs south of the Substation. The road is lined by a grass, gravel shoulder, and drainage ditches.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no previously recorded cultural resources within 1 mile of the project area. A portion of the project area was previously surveyed. During the survey, no subsurface historic and cultural resources were discovered. All directional boring and ground disturbance will take place immediately adjacent to Church Road, in sediments that were likely previously disturbed or comprise of imported, engineered fill. BPA archaeology staff have reviewed the proposed project and determined that the undertaking is the type of activity that does not have the potential to cause effects on historic properties, assuming such properties were present.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Native soils surrounding the project area consist of a mixture of Quatama silt loam and Aloha silt loam, with slopes of 0 to 15 percent. The immediate project area consists of well graded, flat, non-native fill material. Trenching and directional boring would disturb some underlying soils, but disturbance would be localized and limited to the trenching and boring footprint.

Notes:

- Boring cuttings would be spread, stabilized and seeded. Disturbed soils associated with trenching would be stabilized and seeded.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some temporary disturbance of grasses and other vegetation adjacent to Church Road, in the boring and trenching footprint, would occur. No noxious or Federal/state listed vegetation species are known to exist within this area. BPA has determined that the project would have “No effect” on Endangered Species Act-listed plants in Columbia County, OR.

Notes:

- Disturbed areas would be revegetated upon project completion.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction may have very limited disturbance to wildlife that could be present in the project area, however, disturbances would be temporary. No habitat for ESA-listed or state listed wildlife is present in the project area, and BPA has determined that the project would have “No effect” on ESA-listed wildlife species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No waterbodies, floodplains, or fish streams are present in the project area. A drainage ditch runs along the southern property line of Warren Substation. The ditch would not be disturbed during directional boring and communications line installation.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present in the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Trenching and boring are not at depths that would intercept or disturb groundwater and aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would take place on public easements and BPA-fee owned lands, and would not alter existing land use. No specially designated areas are present in the project area. Some traffic disturbance could occur along Church Road during the trenching operations. Construction crews would deploy flaggers and safety signage as necessary to ensure that traffic flow continues. Traffic would not be disturbed during directional drilling underneath Church Road.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not alter the existing visual profile of the project area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Equipment utilized on the project would not substantially impact air quality.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project may temporarily lead to additional noise in the immediate area while boring and trenching equipment is utilized. Impacts would be relatively minimal, isolated, and temporary.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Modern communications infrastructure at Warren Substation would contribute to a more safe, reliable high voltage transmission system. Project construction activity would follow all standard worker and public safety protocols, especially in regards to work near Church Road.

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: BPA and BPA's contractors would coordinate planned work and work schedule with all stakeholders, including local landowners and county officials.

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

Signed: /s/ Aaron Siemers

Aaron Siemers, EPR-4

Date: June 3, 2022