Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: Ross Substation and Complex Station Service Reliability Upgrade Project

Project No.: P03425

Project Manager: Thornton Smith, TEPF-CSB-2

Location: Clark County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.6 Additions and Modifications to Transmission Facilities, B4.7 Fiber Optic Cable

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to upgrade, replace, and install new electrical station service and fiber optic cable networks across BPA's Ross Complex. The improvements are necessary to meet BPA's current reliability standards, and would also better accommodate future infrastructure loads at the Ross Complex. The improvements would occur in three phases.

During Phase 1, a new station service rack structure would be constructed and three electrical duct banks would be installed within the rack. The new rack would be constructed on the west side of the Ross Substation yard, and the existing 115kV bus and rack structures located on the west of the side of the substation yard would be demolished and removed. The footings for the bus and rack structures would be removed and the area would be backfilled, and restored to grade. Underground duct bank installations would occur across the substation yard, starting at the new service rack and extend west toward the Technical Services Building. The duct banks would consist of approximately 1,100 linear feet of medium voltage duct bank, and include approximately 700 linear feet of light voltage duct bank, that would be installed parallel to the medium voltage duct bank.

During Phase 2, an additional station service rack structure would be installed north of the service rack structure installed during Phase 1. About 775 linear feet of new low voltage duct bank would be installed underground in the substation yard, while about 3,700 linear feet of new low voltage duct bank would be installed underground outside of the substation yard. Duct banks would be installed:

- Along the south side of NE North Road between the guard station and NE 15th Avenue as well as a small segment that crosses NE North Road to an existing steel-lattice communications structure
- Along unnamed access roads that parallel the east boundary of the Ross Substation yard, including sections of the Ampere rail line and NE 15th Avenue
- At an unnamed access road south and east of the Ampere building, terminating south of the test laboratory, with a spur that crosses NE Ross Road and terminates at the 345kV Yard

In addition to the electrical duct banks, two new fiber duct banks would be installed. One would parallel the new medium voltage duct bank along NE North Road in a separate trench (approximately 1,100 linear feet), and one would be installed parallel to the new medium voltage duct bank, proceeding west from the microwave steel-lattice structure, along NE North Road, in a separate trench (approximately 350 linear feet). Additionally, two existing switchgears would be replaced with new, in-kind switchgears.

During Phase 3, all work would be limited to electrical panels located inside and on the Ross Maintenance Headquarters building. No ground disturbance would be required for Phase 3's proposed work.

Mechanical trenching, directional boring, or some combination of the two methods would be used to install the duct banks. Mechanical trenches would be about 8 feet wide and 10 feet deep. Where medium and low voltage duct banks would be installed, trench widths may vary to accommodate 3 feet of spacing between trenches, as needed. New manholes and hand holes would be installed, as needed, along the electrical and fiber optic duct banks to facilitate the installation. Manholes would be approximately 8 feet wide by 6 feet long by 12 feet deep.

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/ Becky Hill
Becky Hill
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

KATEY GRANGE
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Katey C. Grange
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: Ross Substation and Complex Station Service Reliability Upgrade Project

Project Site Description

The project site is located on BPA fee-owned property within BPA's Ross Complex located in Vancouver, Washington. The Ross Complex consists of the Ross Substation, Ross Maintenance Headquarters, Technical Services Building, and other BPA support facilities. The complex is surrounded by residential neighborhoods on the north, east, and south, while Highway 99 and Interstate-5 are located about 250 feet and 500 feet, respectively, on the west side of the complex. The complex is split north-south by a riparian corridor associated with Cold Canyon Creek and Burnt Bridge Creek, which are designated freshwater critical habitat for Lower Columbia River coho salmon. This east-west corridor connects the creeks and their floodplains to freshwater-forested shrub wetlands located along both sides of Interstate-5 and Highway 99. A perimeter chain link security fence surrounds the Ross Complex, and railroad tracks run through the east-west riparian corridor. At its closest point, the riparian corridor's vegetation is located about 10 feet north of the chain link security fence that parallels NE North Road. In this specific area of the corridor, Cold Canyon Creek is buried underground in a 42-inch diameter steel casing. The work areas associated with the station service upgrade are comprised of asphalt roadways, vehicle parking lots, sidewalks, the graveled Ross Substation, and grass lawns.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: On October 22, 2022, the BPA archaeologist initiated Section 106 consultation and determined that implementation of the proposed undertaking, would result in no adverse effect to historic properties and no adverse effect to historic transmission lines.

The Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and the Cowlitz Indian Tribe were consulting parties in the Section 106 consultation. On November 1, 2022, DAHP concurred with BPA's determination. No response was received from the Cowlitz Indian Tribe.

Notes:

- An Inadvertent Discovery Plan, with contact information for the BPA cultural resources lead, would be supplied to the construction contractor prior to commencing construction work. Should cultural resources be discovered during project activities, then all project work in the area must stop, and the cultural resources lead must be notified immediately.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The proposed action would result in about 4.2 acres of ground disturbance in asphalt, concrete, and graveled areas, and about 1.1 acres of lawn grass vegetation disturbance along roadsides and adjacent to parking lots. Best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented to prevent the migration of sediment off-site.

Notes:

- Test soils for hazardous materials, which if found, would be disposed of off-site according to local, state, and federal regulations.
- Implement a BPA-approved Erosion and Sediment Control Plan (ESCP) that is guided by Washington Department of Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington.
- Implement a BPA-approved revegetation plan as soon as practicable after disturbance.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status plant species or suitable habitat for special-status plant species are present within the project area. About 1.1 acres of low-quality, regularly mowed grass lawn within the Ross Complex would be disturbed as a result of the proposed project. Additionally, four ornamental, mature trees located in a narrow parking strip would be removed during the duct bank installation just west of South Ampere. The proposed action would have no effect on special-status plant species or special-status plant habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: About 1.1 acres of low-quality, regularly mowed grass lawn habitat would be disturbed as a result of the proposed project, and four ornamental, mature trees located in a narrow parking strip would be removed. Minor and temporary disturbance of wildlife could occur from elevated noise during construction and from the tree removal. Because the work would be occurring adjacent to a currently operating substation and within the overall complex, any wildlife present are likely used to human presence and noise. The four trees to be removed may provide marginal nesting habitat to birds. No special-status wildlife species or suitable habitat for special-status wildlife species are present within the project area. The proposed action would have no effect on special-status wildlife species or habitats.

Notes:

- Remove the parking strip trees between August 15 and March 1, if feasible, to minimize impacts to any potential nesting birds using the trees

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No water bodies or special-status fish species are present within the project area, and the project area is not located within a floodplain. During construction, BMPs would prevent indirect impacts to off-site waterbodies, floodplains, special-status fish species, and habitats. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies, floodplains, fish, or fish habitat.

Notes:

- Implement a BPA-approved ESCP that is guided by Washington Department of Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington.

- Implement a BPA-approved Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) during construction.
- Maintain an oil/fuel spill kit on-site during construction to address containment, cleanup, and disposal in the event of a spill.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No wetlands are present within the project area. BMPs would prevent indirect impacts to off-site wetlands. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact wetlands.

Notes:

- Implement a BPA-approved ESCP that is guided by Washington Department of Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington.
- Implement a BPA-approved SWPPP during construction.
- Maintain an oil/fuel spill kit on-site during construction to address containment, cleanup, and disposal in the event of a spill.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Ground disturbance is unlikely to reach depths to groundwater and no new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers are proposed. BMPs would prevent impacts from unintended spills to groundwater or aquifers. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

Notes:

- Maintain an oil/fuel spill kit on-site during construction to address containment, cleanup, and disposal in the event of a spill.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The installation of new electrical station service and fiber optic cable network would be consistent with, and would not change, the land use of the Ross Complex.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: With the exception of two new station service rack structures near the Ross Substation, the new electrical station service and fiber optic cable network would be installed underground and would not be visible upon project completion. The new rack structures would not be visible from properties outside of the Ross Complex, and would not substantially change the 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 vehicle emissions in the local area. BMPs, such as turning off vehicles when not in use, would be implemented to limit the amount of emissions released in the local area.

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. However, noise impacts would be temporary and intermittent and would only occur during typical working hours (approximately 7am to 7pm). Construction-related noise would not be audible from residential properties surrounding the Ross Complex. There would be no long-term change in ambient noise following completion of the project.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction would be completed by qualified professionals who would follow all applicable safety requirements as detailed in their BPA-accepted site-specific safety plan, in accordance with BPA Contractor Safety and Health Requirements for Prime and Subcontractors, and any additional state, local, or authority having jurisdiction requirements. The safety plan would be maintained on-site during construction and updated, as needed. Therefore, the proposed action would not be expected to impact human health and 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 proposed action would occur on BPA fee-owned property. Therefore, 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/ Becky Hill* *January 04, 2023*
Becky Hill, ECT-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist