

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: AT&T Stewart Mountain Upgrades

Project No.: W0766

Project Manager: Jonathan Toobian – TEPF-CSB2

Location: Whatcom County, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.19 Microwave, meteorological, and radio towers; B4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way; B1.31 Installation or relocation of machinery and equipment.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow AT&T to upgrade existing equipment at the AT&T wireless site on the Monroe-Custer No. 1 line on structure 70/3. The proposed upgrades to AT&T's equipment would involve the removal and replacement of 4 antennas and associated co-axial cable to the telecommunication equipment box located below the structure within the fenced-in communication equipment area. The equipment slated for removal would be replaced with new, similar, and like equipment.

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/ Sylas Daughtrey

Sylas Daughtrey
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

<u>/s/ Sarah T. Biegel</u>	<u>April 17, 2023</u>
Sarah T. Biegel	Date
NEPA Compliance Officer	

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist



NPCE Memo

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

All work would occur on structure 70/3 of BPA's Monroe-Custer No. 1 line and the fenced-in AT&T telecommunication site in Whatcom County, WA. The legal parcel description is Township 38 North, Range 4 East, Section 30. The proposed site of construction has previous ground disturbance, and is located in areas that are graveled, mulched, paved, or have compacted soils. The water body of Lake Whatcom is located approximately 0.25 miles from the proposed project location. The AT&T telecommunication site is surrounded by large residential parcels, undeveloped timberland, and Lake Whatcom. Construction equipment used would most likely include a bucket truck, light duty trucks, and hand-held power tools.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed work does not include any ground-disturbing activities that would affect cultural or historic resources. The footprint of BPA's transmission tower structure, and the fenced-in area of the AT&T transmission facility structure, shows highly unlikely archaeological resources that would be identified. BPA Cultural and Historian review has shown that the proposed project would have no potential to cause effect to cultural resources and historic properties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance would occur at the existing communication site. The area of activities would take place in and around previously-disturbed areas. These previously-disturbed areas include graveled, mulched, paved, and/or compacted soils. The AT&T communication site would be returned to pre-project conditions from all disturbed soils surrounding the proposed construction area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project location is unvegetated; therefore, there would be no impacts to vegetation, including Federal or state special-status species and/or habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Federal or state special-status species or habitats at any of the sites that would be impacted by the project. If any active nests are found on the tower prior to the project activities, the work would be delayed until the nest is unoccupied. The construction and work area is located within well-established areas outside critical habitat. Temporary disturbance to non-sensitive wildlife may occur during work periods, but it is anticipated that wildlife would distribute to adjacent habitats and that noise disturbance would be consistent with ongoing operations of the sites.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No water bodies, floodplains, or fish disturbance would occur at the existing communication site.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands at the existing communication site; therefore, there would be no impacts to wetlands or specially-designated areas.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The construction area would take place in and around areas with previous ground disturbance. Excavation would not occur to intersect groundwater. No disturbance to groundwater and aquifers would take place.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use is proposed; therefore, there would be no impacts to land use or specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in the appearance of the telecommunication site is proposed. All new equipment installations would be in kind; therefore, there would be no impacts to visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

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

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: All applicable safety standards would be followed during project work. The project would not create conditions that would increase risk to 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: BPA owns the land where work would occur. AT&T would be responsible for coordinating landowner notifications to gain access.

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

Signed: /s/ Sylas Daughtrey April 17, 2023
Sylas Daughtrey Date
Environmental Protection Specialist