

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** T-Mobile Skykomish River Upgrade

**Project No.:** W0937

**Project Manager:** Jonathan Toobian, TEPF-TPP-3

**Location:** Snohomish County, Washington

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B1.19 Microwave, Meteorological, and Radio Towers; B4.9 Additions and Modifications to Transmission Facilities

**Description of the Proposed Action:** The Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow T-Mobile to upgrade the existing wireless antennas at the Skykomish River wireless site located on Structure 26/4 of BPA's Echo Lake-Monroe No.1 Transmission Line in Snohomish County, Washington.

The project would include installing three new antennas, relocating three existing antennas on the structure, and installing two new cabinets on an existing concrete pad under the structure within a previously-disturbed fenced area. The work also includes approximately 30 feet of trenching adjacent to the concrete pad to install conduit to connect the new cabinets to the existing equipment. The trench would be a maximum of 24 inches wide and a minimum of 36 inches deep and would occur entirely within previously disturbed areas inside the existing fencing. T-Mobile would access the communications equipment with a bucket truck using existing access roads and by climbing the structure.

**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/ Jeremy Doschka

Jeremy Doschka

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

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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:** T-Mobile Skykomish River Upgrade

## **Project Site Description**

The project area is located on structure 26/4 of BPA's Echo Lake-Monroe No.1 Transmission Line, approximately 3.5 miles west of Monroe, Washington in Section 10, Township 27 North, Range 7 East. The project area is located on an existing steel lattice tower and a fenced communications structure located beneath the tower in a maintained transmission line corridor. The tower is located near a low-density residential area surrounded by mixed conifer forested areas consisting of secondary growth. The Skykomish River is approximately 0.5 mile to the north and a small wetland is located south of the structure on both sides of the access road.

## **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All ground disturbance would occur within T-Mobile's fenced area underneath the transmission structure in a previously-disturbed area. A BPA historian reviewed the proposed project actions and determined that the project has no potential to cause effects to historic resources in a memo dated August 28, 2023.

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Trenching activities associated with conduit installation would result in ground disturbance in a grassy area within the existing fencing. All ground disturbance would occur within previously-disturbed areas from the installation of the steel-lattice structure and T-Mobile communications facility under the structure. Excavated material would be stored temporarily onsite and then used for backfill. Best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented to prevent the migration of sediment off-site.

### **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 at the project area. Therefore, the proposed action would have no effect on special status plant species. All ground disturbance would occur within a previously disturbed, low-quality grassy area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are forested areas consisting of secondary growth surrounding the project area, but no occurrences of ESA or special-status species are documented nearby. Local wildlife may be temporarily disturbed by project noise during daylight hours. If any birds are found to be nesting on the transmission tower, construction of the project would be delayed until the birds have left the nest.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area does not contain any water bodies, floodplains, or surface connectivity to fish-bearing streams. Therefore, the project would not impact water bodies, floodplains, or fish.

#### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project area does not contain any wetlands; however, there are wetlands delineated on either side of the access road approximately 60 feet south of the tower. The wetland north of the access road extends to approximately 10 feet south of the southwest corner of the tower. Best management practices would be followed to minimize impacts to adjacent wetlands by implementing the following measures.

Notes:

- During trenching activities under the tower, standard construction erosion control measures should be installed to prevent indirect impacts to the wetland.
- Work vehicles and equipment accessing the structure should stay on the existing BPA access road and park in the existing parking area near the tower to avoid impacting wetlands.

#### **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Trenching activities would not provide a pathway for groundwater contamination. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

#### **8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not alter existing land use and there are no specially designated areas present at the project site.

#### **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The wireless antennas and equipment are consistent with the existing use of the utility corridor and radio tower facilities. There would be no substantial change to visual quality after the proposed action is complete.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There may be a small amount of vehicle emissions during project activities; however, there would be no substantial changes to air quality after the proposed action is complete.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action could temporarily produce noise levels at greater than current ambient conditions. Noise impacts would be temporary and intermittent and would only occur during daylight hours (approximately 7AM to 7PM) for several days. 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: All standard safety protocols would be followed during project activities. Therefore, the proposed action would not be expected to 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: T-Mobile would be responsible for contacting and coordinating with the landowner prior to beginning project activities onsite.

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

Signed: /s/ Jeremy Doschka September 8, 2023  
Jeremy Doschka Date  
Environmental Protection Specialist