

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: McNary Substation Bay Addition and Fiber Optic Cable Installation Project

Project No.: P04246 and L0481

Project Manager: Sarah Sprague, TEPS-TPP-1

Location: Umatilla County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.4 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities; B4.11 Electric power substations and interconnection facilities.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to construct a new 230-kV bay at the McNary Substation, and relocate, replace, and install new transmission equipment and fiber optic cable. The updates to the substation would increase operational efficiency, transmission reliability, and alleviate transmission congestion by providing a new point of interconnection for BPA customers. With the additional capacity of a new bay, BPA also proposes to allow Umatilla Electric Cooperative (UEC) to interconnect to the McNary Substation to serve increasing transmission load demands in the area.

To meet the transmission reliability needs and accommodate the interconnection request, BPA would construct a new 230-kV bay within the existing substation yard, relocate the existing 230-kV section 3 bus tie to the new bay, and relocate the McNary–Franklin No. 2 transmission line to the new 230-kV bay. Once vacated, BPA proposes to allow UEC’s McNary-Wanapa 230-kV transmission line to interconnect at the bay previously occupied by McNary-Franklin No. 2 transmission line. BPA proposes to install outdoor conduits and cables, and install new control panels in the relay houses, in the main control house, and in the 500-kV control house, as well as install bus supports and switch replacements at the 230-kV bus tie.

Two new self-supporting 100-foot-tall, engineered steel poles supported on drilled shaft foundations up to 60 feet below the ground’s surface would be installed in the substation yard. These new structures would be identified as structures 1/1 and 1/2 on the McNary-Franklin No. 2 line. BPA would replace two wood pole H-frame structures (currently identified as structures 1/1 and 1/2 on the McNary-Franklin No. 2 line) that are about 85 feet tall, and located about 50-feet and 400-feet, respectively, south of the substation’s perimeter fence. The two new replacement structures would become structures 1/3 and 1/4 on the McNary-Franklin No. 2 transmission line, and would also be self-supporting 100-foot-tall, engineered steel poles. The new structures would be installed within 100 feet of the wood pole structures they would be replacing, and would be installed on drilled shaft foundations up to 60 feet below the ground’s surface. New conductor would be installed on the four new McNary-Franklin No. 2 transmission line engineered steel pole structures and terminate in the new substation bay.

Existing wood pole structures 1/1 and 1/2, associated guy wires, and line anchors would be pulled up from the ground's surface or excavated and cut below the ground's surface.

BPA would install about 1,000 linear feet of new fiber optic cable between the main control house and an existing customer vault located about 60 feet south of the substation's fence. About 480 linear feet of cable would be installed underground in a trench within a new 4-inch-diameter conduit with marker balls (420 linear feet would be located in the substation yard, while the remaining 60 linear feet would be installed south of the substation's fence). The trench would closely parallel an existing fiber conduit path and would be about 2 feet wide and about 4 feet deep. The new trench and fiber cable conduit would intersect with an existing underground tunnel in the substation yard. The remaining 520 linear feet of new fiber cable would be installed in the tunnel and would continue from the intersection point to the control house.

BPA would also install new conduit and fiber optic cable in a new trench between a customer vault and a BPA vault, which are about 10 feet apart. Additionally, BPA would install an additional 1,000 linear foot long segment of new fiber optic cable between the main control house, BPA's vault, and the customer vault within an existing underground conduit and existing tunnel systems.

Existing unpaved access roads would be used to access work areas near the new structures. Equipment would be temporarily stored and staged in two open areas (approximately 0.6 acre and 1.6 acres in size), within the McNary-John Day No. 2 transmission line right-of-way, located immediately north of the McNary Substation.

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 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: McNary Substation Bay Addition and Fiber Optic Cable Installation Project (P04246, L0481)

Project Site Description

The project site is located at BPA's McNary Substation in Umatilla County, Oregon. The McNary Substation is located to the northeast of the town of Umatilla, in the Columbia Plateau ecoregion. The area is high desert shrub-steppe and grasslands habitat. The ground's surface is composed of gravel and earth with grassy and weedy cover that was previously disturbed during construction of the nearby McNary Dam. Some riparian vegetation (cottonwoods and shrubs) and a small area of native sagebrush exist near the Columbia River, which is about 2,500 feet to the north of the substation.

The substation is surrounded by mixed development, agriculture, and recreational land. Interstate 82 is about 0.25 mile west of the substation, industrial warehouse buildings and open shrub and grass habitat areas on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-managed lands are located to the east, and Union Pacific Railroad tracks, an irrigation canal, and multiple transmission lines and towers are located within 2,000 feet of the substation's southern fence. To the north is the Columbia River with marinas, parks, viewpoints, and the McNary Dam. As close as 120 feet away from one of the staging areas, there are multiple ponds, wetlands, and tributaries to the Columbia River. However, these features are located on the opposite side of the perimeter fence and paved 3rd Street.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The BPA archaeologist and historian initiated Section 106 consultation on March 21, 2023, with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, the Nez Perce Tribe, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation responded on April 12, 2023, with a request for an archaeological survey that included subsurface testing in previously undisturbed areas or where the project would reach greater depths than have been previously disturbed. The SHPO concurred with the Area of Potential Effect work area on April 14, 2023.

On August 11, 2023, the BPA archaeologist and historian determined that implementation of the proposed undertaking would result in no adverse effect to historic properties pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, and notified the consulting parties. No comments were received from consulting parties on the report or determination.

Notes:

- A Post Review Discovery Procedure form with contact information for the BPA cultural resources lead would be supplied to the construction contractor prior to commencing construction work. Should any cultural resources be discovered during project activities, then all project work must stop in the area, and the cultural resources lead should be notified immediately.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Soil disturbance would occur where the new structures would be installed, retired structures would be removed, and trenching would occur. New tower locations are in relatively flat areas with little risk of erosion and are not near areas that would be adversely affected by sediments. Best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented to prevent migration of sediment off site. The area is in gravelly soil that has already been graded and altered by past construction. Impacts to geology or soils are expected to be low.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No federally-listed, special-status species or habitats exist within the project area. The work areas and staging areas outside of the McNary Substation yard (approximately 2.2 acres total) are comprised of bare earth from frequent vehicle and equipment disturbance, and vegetation such as bunch grasses, weedy species, and occasional rabbit brush. About 1.6 acre of vegetation would be temporarily disturbed, and less than 1,000 square feet of permanent vegetation removal would occur. Temporarily disturbed areas would be reseeded with regionally appropriate seed-mixes. With the revegetation of disturbed sites, impacts to plants are expected to be low.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No federally-listed, special-status species or habitats exist within the project area. Common wildlife species potentially using the project area may be temporarily affected during construction and some minor impacts to ground nesting or burrowing species may occur during trenching activities, but overall impacts to wildlife are expected to be low.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No work would take place next to water bodies or floodplains. Ground disturbing work would take place well away from the Columbia River and its tributaries such that construction would not lead to sediments or other material entering the water bodies. No impacts to water bodies, floodplains or fish are expected.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would take place in dry upland areas. No wetland areas are present in the project area. No impacts to wetlands would occur.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No areas of shallow groundwater or aquifers are known to exist within the project area. Subsurface work would be limited to auguring for new transmission structures and trenching for fiber optic cable and conduit installation, and drilled shaft footings for new and replacement engineered steel pole structures. No hazardous materials beyond fuels and oils used in construction equipment would be used for the project, and spill remediation materials would be stored at the construction site to quickly contain any releases of oil or gas. No impacts to groundwater and aquifers are expected.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no specially-designated areas within the project area. The project area already contains substation equipment and several transmission lines, some of which span the Union Pacific railroad line on the south side of the substation. New conductor installation over the existing railroad line would not change the land use of the railroad's land nor would it disrupt railroad operations. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-managed land is currently permitted to BPA for uses associated with the adjacent McNary Substation and would be temporarily used by BPA as a staging area; therefore, no permanent changes to existing land uses would occur. No impacts to land use or specially-designated areas would occur.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some minor changes in visual quality would occur due to the replacement of wood pole structures with taller steel transmission line structures. However, all work would take place in the substation yard or within existing transmission line rights-of-ways where several transmission lines already exist. Impacts to visual quality would be low.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some minor and temporary vehicle and construction equipment emissions and fugitive dust would occur during construction of the project. No new sources of emissions are anticipated once the project is constructed. Air quality impacts are expected to be low.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some minor and temporary vehicle and construction noise would occur during construction of the project. Construction noise could temporarily impact residences located about 0.25 mile away from the substation; however, construction is not expected to contribute substantially to noise impacts at the residences. Construction noise would be limited to working hours during the day and would only last for the duration of construction, approximately eight weeks. Overall, noise impacts are expected to be low.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Contractors would follow BPA and OSHA safety standards and would submit a safety plan for BPA's review and approval prior to commencing construction work onsite. The project would not create any new safety hazards or use materials that could threaten human health and safety. No new impacts to human health and safety are anticipated.

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's Realty Specialist is currently coordinating with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Union Pacific Railroad, and Umatilla Electric Cooperative, and would send notices to landowners prior to construction.

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

Becky Hill
Environmental Protection Specialist

October 19, 2023

Date