

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Odell Butte Communications Site – Microwave Antenna Relocation and Beam Path Maintenance

PP&A No.: 4870

Project Manager: Rega Bamouni – TFRH-MALIN

Location: Klamath County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine maintenance; B1.19 Microwave, meteorological, and radio towers.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to remove the tops from approximately 16 trees that are currently either blocking, or at risk of blocking, the microwave beam path between Odell Butte and Wolf Mountain Communications Sites. The trees would be cut by conventional methods that require a qualified arborist to climb each tree, then cut five- to ten-foot sections. The sections are then lowered to the ground using ropes. Debris would either be chipped and scattered on site or removed from the site and disposed of outside of lands managed by the United States Forest Service (USFS).

BPA also proposes to relocate the existing microwave antenna seven feet above its current location on its existing tower. The antenna would be raised into its new position using a small crane, boom truck, or similar means, and then secured in place. Equipment would use existing roads to travel to the site, and no site development or staging areas would be required.

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/ Oden Jahn

Oden Jahn

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer Date: February 26, 2024

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: Odell Butte Communications Site - Beam Path Maintenance and Antenna Relocation

Project Site Description

The project site is located at Odell Butte Communications Site, approximately 8.5 miles west of Crescent, Oregon in Klamath County. The beam path in the project area crosses USFS-managed property that is steep and rocky with conifers and other vegetation suited to high-elevation arid landscapes.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the USFS Deschutes National Forest, the Klamath Tribe, and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon on July 13th, 2023. On September 7th, 2023, a BPA archaeologist and contract archaeologist conducted a pedestrian survey of the project area and identified one pre-contact archaeological site (OBRS-TC-01). This site was determined eligible for listing on to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP); however, given the distance of the site to the proposed work, BPA determined that the project would result in no adverse effect to historic properties. BPA worked closely with the USFS Deschutes National Forest to evaluate the site and come to this final effects determination. BPA sent out final consultation on November 8th, 2023, no responses were received. . Avoidance of the site should occur during construction.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The proposed activities have the potential to lightly disturb surface soils in the vicinity of the tree cutting activities due foot traffic and managing the debris generated. The relocation of the microwave antenna would have no significant impact on soils or geology because work would take place in an existing parking area. Implementing the below measures would further minimize disturbances to soils.

Notes: The BPA Forestry Department would be responsible for implementing the following conservation measures during this project:

- Operations would be designed and implemented to minimize compaction, displacement, or erosion.
- Mounds, berms, and ruts would be smoothed to the original contour.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Other than whitebark pine, there are no known Federal/state special-status plants in the project area. Non-sensitive plants in the vicinity of the tree cutting activities would be impacted by foot traffic and managing the debris generated, and the project has the potential to introduce undesirable species to the work area. The relocation of the microwave antenna would have little impact on plants because work would take place in an existing parking area. Implementing the below measures would result in the project having no effect to whitebark pine and would minimize the potential to introduce undesirable species and disturb existing vegetation.

Notes: The BPA Forestry Department would be responsible for implementing the following conservation measures during this project:

- Whitebark pines must not be modified or removed.
- The USFS has marked all whitebark pine in the project area. USFS markings must not be removed or altered without first contacting the USFS District Botanist.
- BPA's contract arborists, or other personnel responsible for removing tree tops, must be able to identify and avoid disturbing whitebark pines at the site.
- Machines, vehicles and other equipment (e.g., wood chippers) must be cleaned prior to working within the project area.
- Do not spread weeds or other unwanted vegetation.
- Chipped debris shall not exceed a depth of two inches when spread on site.
- Minimize soil disturbance as much as possible.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In general, the project would have minimal impacts to wildlife and habitat related to temporary disturbance associated with elevated noise and human presence. There are no known Federal /state special-status wildlife species in the project area. Other wildlife species that may be in the area at the time of project activities may be temporarily disturbed or disrupted; however, suitable habitat is not limited in the project area and temporarily displaced wildlife would not be precluded from moving to, and sheltering in, adjacent areas.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no waterbodies, floodplains, Federal/state special-status aquatic species, or habitat in the project area.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands in the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project does not have the potential to impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The Odell Butte site includes an active USFS fire lookout, as well as communications sites operated by other users. Project activities would temporarily increase traffic and congestion at the communications site. The concentration of activity from tree cutting activities or the relocation of the microwave antenna could temporarily distract fire lookout staff from performing their duties. Implementing the following measure would minimize the potential for project activities to affect fire lookout activities during fire season.

Notes: Vegetation treatments and microwave antenna work must be completed before or after fire season.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Odell Butte is part of the scenic landscape visible from State Highway 58 and the Crescent Cut-off Road. Alterations of the landscape at the communications site have the potential to cause noticeable impacts to the visual quality of the scenic landscape from the previously mentioned viewpoints. Implementing the following measure would minimize the effects to visual resources. The relocation of the microwave antenna would have no significant impact on visual resources.

Notes: Only tree tops are to be removed as part of this project.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would utilize conventional equipment powered by petroleum fuels. The resulting exhaust would temporarily impact air quality in the immediate vicinity while the equipment is in operation. Baseline air quality conditions are expected to return shortly after project activities cease.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project is located in the vicinity of other communications facilities. Noise impacts would be temporary and occur only during daylight hours.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Forestry activities carry the risk of starting wildfires. A wildfire at the site has the potential to impact fire lookout staff, the fire lookout structure, fire lookout operations, and other users' communications sites. Implementing the following measure would minimize the effects to human health and safety.

Notes: The BPA Forestry Department would be responsible for implementing the following conservation measures during this project:

- BPA's contract arborists would be required to follow local Industrial Fire Precaution Levels (IFPL) or other USFS fire prevention requirements.
- Vegetation treatments and microwave antenna work must be completed before or after fire season.

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: On November 15, 2022, the Deschutes National Forest provided a written response to BPA's proposed project. The response included a review and several stipulations that have been captured in the CX Checklist. No other landowners would be affected. BPA must contact the Deschutes National Forest's special uses permit administrator prior to the vegetation treatments.

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

Signed: /s/ Oden Jahn

Oden Jahn

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: February 26, 2024