

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: T-Mobile Telecommunications Equipment Upgrade and Footing Reinforcement at Carson Wireless Site (*Update to previous CX issued on December 11, 2023*)

Project No.: W0921

Project Manager: Jonathan Toobian, TEPF-CSB-2

Location: Skamania County, Washington

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

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow T-Mobile to upgrade its telecommunications equipment and to reinforce transmission structure footings at its Carson wireless site, located at structure 10/2 on the North Bonneville-Midway No. 1 Transmission Line in Carson, Skamania County, Washington. Telecommunications equipment would be installed on an existing transmission structure and within the associated fenced equipment compound located at the base of the structure.

On the existing transmission structure, T-Mobile would:

- Remove three existing remote radio units (RRUs)
- Remove three existing combined over voltage protection (COVP) devices
- Remove all existing hybrid cables
- Install three new panel antennas
- Install three new RRUs
- Install two 100-foot hybrid cables with associated junction boxes and breakout pendants
- Relocate one existing microwave radio antenna

Within the existing ground-level equipment compound, T-Mobile would:

- Remove one existing COVP device
- Remove one existing equipment cabinet
- Remove one existing combination equipment cabinet and 100-amp panel box
- Install a new equipment H-frame to support one new equipment cabinet and one new 200-amp panel box
- Mount one new equipment cabinet and one new battery cabinet on the existing concrete pad (T-Mobile could replace the concrete pad in-kind, if required)
- Install one new timer controlled LED light
- Install two new junction boxes to receive new hybrid cables

- Upgrade incoming electric service from 100 amp to 200 amp, in coordination with the utility provider Skamania Public Utility District (Skamania PUD)

An analysis of the transmission structure footings found that gravel anchors are needed to prevent uplifting. T-Mobile would add an approximately 13-foot-wide by 17-foot-long by 1-foot-deep gravel pad around two of the footings.

This CX has been updated to include additional proposed actions associated with upgrading electric service from 100 amp to 200 amp. T-Mobile would remove the existing 100 amp utility meter that is currently mounted on a Skamania PUD wood distribution pole located south of structure 10/2 near the southern border of BPA fee-owned transmission line right-of-way (ROW). In the same area, T-Mobile would then install a new 200 amp utility meter mounted on a new approximately 6-foot-tall by 6-foot wide metal equipment H-frame. Approximately 10 feet of electric service line in 3-inch-diameter conduit would be buried in an excavated trench from the Skamania PUD distribution pole to the new meter and from the new meter to an intercept point with existing underground conduit to the equipment compound. Excavated areas would be backfilled and returned to original conditions.

Ground disturbance would occur in areas that were previously disturbed at the base of structure 10/2, within the existing, graveled equipment compound, and near a Skamania PUD distribution pole at the southern boundary of the ROW. The site would be accessed via existing routes of travel. All decommissioned equipment would be removed from the site.

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.

Walker Stinnette
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.

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Project Site Description

The project site is located on BPA fee-owned transmission line ROW near structure 10/2 on the North Bonneville-Midway No. 1 Transmission Line in Carson, Skamania County, Washington (Township 3 North, Range 8 East, Section 28). Ground disturbance would occur within an approximately 100-foot by 100-foot work area centered on the transmission structure and within an approximately 20-foot by 20-foot work area near a Skamania PUD distribution pole at the southern boundary of the ROW. Vegetation consists of low-growing, common grasses, forbs, and weeds that are regularly mowed as part of routine transmission line right-of-way maintenance. The underlying Washougal soil series is not hydric, and no wetlands or surface waters are present within or near the project site. Residential properties are located outside of the right-of-way (ROW) to the north and the south. All work areas are located within a designated Urban Area of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (CRGNSA).

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The North Bonneville-Midway No 1 Transmission Line is considered eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NHRP). However, the proposed undertaking is considered normal maintenance and would not alter the integrity or the eligibility of this resource. A survey of the area was completed previously, and no other historic or cultural resources were identified. Therefore on November 24, 2023, BPA determined that the proposed undertaking would have no potential to cause effects to historic properties (BPA CR Project No.: WA 2024 027).

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would result in soil disturbance from installation of the gravel footing anchors, upgrading electric service, and minor soil compaction from vehicle and equipment use. All ground disturbance would occur within two distinct areas no greater than approximately 100 feet by 100 feet and 20 feet by 20 feet. Approximately 450 total square feet of productive soils would be permanently covered in gravel pads. Temporarily disturbed soils would eventually stabilize as vegetation becomes reestablished following completion of the proposed action. The proposed action would not impact geology.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would remove, crush, or cover some common grasses, forbs, and weeds within two distinct areas no greater than approximately 100 feet by 100 feet and 20 feet by 20 feet. Approximately 450 total square feet of vegetation would be permanently covered in gravel pads. Temporarily disturbed areas would eventually revegetate following completion of the proposed action. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status plant species within or near the project site, and no suitable special-status species habitat is present.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary wildlife disturbance could occur from elevated noise and human presence during implementation of the proposed action. However, wildlife species that could be present in the area would likely be habituated to this level of disturbance given surrounding land uses. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status wildlife species near the project site, and no suitable special-status species habitat is present.

Notes:

- If any active nests are found on the communications tower, the project would be delayed until the environmental lead confirms that the nest is unoccupied.

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 habitat is located within or near the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies or floodplains and would have no effect on special status fish species or habitat.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present within or near the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Excavation is unlikely to reach depths that would intersect groundwater, and the proposed action would not generate or use hazardous materials that would contaminate groundwater or aquifers, if present. No new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers are proposed. 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 could temporarily impact adjacent residential land uses due to construction noise. However, there would be no permanent land use impacts following completion of the proposed action. The project site is located entirely within a designated

Urban Area of the CRGNSA, which means the project would be exempt from compliance with CRGNSA requirements, including those contained in the CRGNSA Management Plan.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During construction, the presence of equipment and general construction activities, including minor vegetation disturbance, would cause temporary visual impacts. The final configuration of structure-mounted and ground level equipment would change slightly from the current installation, and adding approximately 450 total square feet of gravel would constitute a permanent visual change. However, these changes would be consistent with the existing visual quality of the project site and would not be overtly noticeable.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would produce minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions in the local area. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the proposed action.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would produce intermittent and temporary construction-related noise at levels greater than current ambient conditions, which could be audible from nearby residential properties. Noise impacts would be temporary and would only occur during daylight hours (approximately 7 AM to 7 PM). 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: The proposed action would not generate or use hazardous materials. Decommissioned equipment would be removed from the site. 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: All proposed work would occur on BPA fee-owned property. 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:

Walker Stinnette
Environmental Protection Specialist