

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Columbia Generating Station 500-kV Motor Operated Disconnect Switch Replacement

**Project No.:** P06520

**Project Manager:** Charla Burke, TEPS-TPP-1

**Location:** Benton County, Washington

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B4.11 Electrical power substations and interconnection facilities

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to design and install a replacement 500-kV Motor Operated Disconnect (MOD) switch in Energy Northwest's Columbia Generating Station's (CGS) transformer substation. The existing disconnect switch failed during the 2023 CGS refueling outage. Replacing the MOD switch would reinstate the clearance limit required for BPA to perform maintenance, meet BPA's required safety standards, and fulfill the interconnection technical requirements for the Network Integration Transmission Service and Network Operating agreements.

During the 2025 CGS refueling outage, BPA would remove the existing switch, bypass jumper cables, and unusable bus conductor. BPA would then install the new MOD switch on new foundations constructed by Energy Northwest, install necessary bus conductor and bus supports for the MOD overhead connections, and wiring connections. BPA would not conduct any ground disturbing activities and would not dispose of any equipment or materials removed from CGS transformer substation yard. All work would be performed within the existing yard. General equipment that may be utilized for this project includes: tractor-trailer, crane, and transmission line bucket truck.

**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.

Laura Roberts  
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:** Columbia Generating Station 500-kV Motor Operated Disconnect Switch Replacement

## **Project Site Description**

The proposed MOD switch replacement, occurring within the CGS transformer substation yard, is sited on the Hanford Site (Hanford). The project area (T11N, R28E, Section 5), located on the arid Columbia Plateau of central Washington, is part of a large energy complex which includes the CGS nuclear power plant and associated infrastructure, and BPA's Ashe Substation and Ashe Maintenance Headquarters. The complex, situated in highly disturbed shrub-steppe habitat, has no waterbodies or wetlands occurring within the general vicinity.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Pursuant to 36 CFR 800.3(a)(1), BPA has determined this undertaking is the type of activity that does not have the potential to cause effects on historic properties assuming such historic properties were present.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbing work is associated with the MOD switch replacement, as a result geology or soils would not be impacted by the proposed project.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is no vegetation in the existing CGS transformer substation yard; therefore, the activities would not impact any vegetation, including Federal or state special-status species or habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have temporary noise and disturbance impacts to local wildlife related to elevated equipment noise and human presence, but any disturbed wildlife would temporarily disperse to adjacent habitat during the temporary disturbance. There are no Federal/state special-status species or habitat present within the vicinity of the CGS transformer substation yard.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No waterbodies occur within the vicinity of the project area, as a result the MOD switch replacement would have no impact on surface waters, floodplains, or fish.

## **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands occur within the vicinity of the project area, as a result the MOD switch replacement would have no impact on wetlands.

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbing work is associated with the MOD switch replacement, as a result groundwater or aquifers would not be impacted by the proposed project.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use or specially-designated areas would occur as a result of the MOD switch replacement.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The MOD switch replacement would have minimal impacts to visual quality and the results would remain consistent with the existing surroundings of the CGS transformer substation yard.

## **10. Air Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The MOD switch replacement may generate a small amount of vehicle emissions and dust during construction. Existing facility emissions may slightly increase or decrease according to equipment installed or removed. These changes would not significantly alter the emission profile of CGS transformer substation yard.

## **11. Noise**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours from the proposed project. Replacement of the MOD switch may result in a slight change in noise emitted by the CGS transformer substation yard. These changes would not significantly alter the overall noise level of CGS transformer substation yard.

## **12. Human Health and Safety**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Workers would follow all standard and Hanford site specific safety protocols. Activities would not 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: BPA would continue its ongoing coordination with Energy Northwest.

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

Signed:

Laura Roberts  
Environmental Protection Specialist