

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Biglow Canyon Wind Generation Interconnection Project

Project No.: G0978

Project Manager: Cherilyn Randall, TPC-TPP-4

Location: Sherman County, Oregon

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

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to install equipment inside of a yet-to-be constructed Portland General Electric (PGE) control house associated with PGE's existing Biglow Canyon wind generation facility. BPA would install communications and control equipment, including SCADA/generation meters, power quality meters, remote terminal units, data phase measure units, field intra-network, network management system, data combiners, communication batteries, switches, interfaces, alarms, and other electronic appurtenances. BPA would not fund or carry out any ground-disturbing activities or activities associated with the construction of PGE's control house.

The BPA activities would support the interconnection of surplus generation from PGE's Biglow Canyon wind generation facility into BPA's Federal Columbia River Transmission System.

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.¹

Becky Hill
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

¹ BPA is aware of the November 12, 2024, decision in *Marin Audubon Society v. Federal Aviation Administration*, No. 23-1067 (D.C. Cir. Nov. 12, 2024). To the extent that a court may conclude that the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA are not judicially enforceable or binding on this agency action, BPA has nonetheless elected to follow those regulations at 40 Code Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) §§ 1500– 1508, in addition to the US Department of Energy’s NEPA implementing procedures at 10 C.F.R. Part § 1021, to meet the agency’s obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.

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 inside PGE's yet-to-be constructed control house, which would be constructed about 4 miles southeast of Rufus, in Sherman County, Oregon.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The BPA archaeologist and historian reviewed the proposed action and determined, per 36 CFR 800.3(a)(1), that the undertaking is a type of activity that does not have the potential to cause effects on historic properties, assuming such historic properties were present. BPA made a No Potential to Cause Effect determination on December 13, 2024.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no ground disturbing activities in the proposed action. Therefore, geology and soils would not be impacted due to the implementation of the proposed action.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would occur inside of a control house. Therefore, plants would not be impacted due to the implementation of the proposed action.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would occur inside of a control house. Therefore, wildlife and habitats would not be impacted due to the implementation of the proposed action.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would occur inside of a control house. Therefore, water bodies, floodplains, and fish would not be impacted due to the implementation of the proposed action.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would occur inside of a control house. Therefore, wetlands would not be impacted due to the implementation of the proposed action.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would occur inside of a control house. Therefore, groundwater and aquifers would not be impacted due to implementation of the proposed action.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: PGE owns and operates the facility where the proposed action would be implemented. No other lands or specially-designated areas are involved in the implementation of the proposed action.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would occur inside of a PGE control house. Therefore, the visual quality of the area would not be impacted due to the implementation of the proposed action.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small amount of vehicle emissions would occur during project implementation. However, there would be no substantial changes to air quality during or after the implementation of the proposed action.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project implementation may create low-level, temporary noise inside the control house. However, the noise would be intermittent, would only occur during daylight hours, and would likely only last for one to two days. Operating noise would not increase due to equipment installation. Therefore, the noise impacts to the surrounding areas would be negligible.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During project implementation, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Therefore, implementation of the proposed action 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 is coordinating with PGE. No other landowner coordination is necessary.

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

Signed:

Becky Hill
Environmental Protection Specialist