Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: La Pine Substation Shunt Capacitor Expansion

Project No.: P03443

Project Manager: Alaric Hsu, TEPS-TPP-1

Location: Deschutes 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 expand the existing La Pine Substation near La Pine, Oregon to accommodate installation of three additional shunt capacitors and associated equipment (listed below). The expansion would occur on the northwest side of the substation and would increase the substation footprint by approximately 300 feet by 340 feet.

Some existing infrastructure that is not owned by BPA would need to be removed or relocated at the onset of the project. Zayo Fiber would remove their fiber optic regen facility infrastructure within the project area, which consists of three prefabricated buildings and associated infrastructure. This would include demolishing and removing the building foundations, the fence that surrounds the Zayo buildings and restoring the area to previous conditions, except that the existing fiber vault would remain for use by BPA.

Midstate Electric Cooperative (MEC) would remove its existing fiber line which initially enters the project area aboveground from the north and attaches to a fiber pole before entering a belowground fiber vault and continuing underground to the existing Zayo Fiber Optic Regen Facility. MEC would remove their fiber pole and the MEC fiber vault as part of this work. To maintain the fiber connection, BPA would install a new 4-foot by 4-foot by 4-foot vault on the north side of the proposed project area. To minimize ground disturbance, the existing MEC underground conduit that is in the project area would be abandoned in place. Additionally, a MEC low-voltage transformer would be removed from the project area and not replaced. Upon completion of the project, all fiber within the substation yard would be owned and operated by BPA.

Several electrical grounding wells would be removed from the north side of the project area.

The area where the expansion would occur is forested and 335 trees would need to be removed for the project. Of the 335 trees that are proposed for removal, 256 are dead from a 2024 wildfire that went through the area. The trees consist of lodgepole and ponderosa pines, ranging in height from 20 to 96-feet-tall, with an average height of 50 feet. The diameter range is 5 to 28 inches, with an average diameter of 5 inches. BPA would remove the tree stumps by grubbing or pulling them out with an excavator. The trees and slash (leaves, limbs, tree stumps and roots) from tree removal would be removed from the project site and transported to offsite locations about 1.5

miles west and northwest from the project location for the USFS to dispose of, in locations where the USFS has previously decked merchantable trees.

Staging of materials during construction would be in a 45-foot-wide by 80-foot-long area on the northeast side of the facility and in a 45-foot-wide by 110-foot-long area south of the expansion area.

Four 75-foot-tall, engineered steel poles would be installed to a depth of 21 feet, to support a new overhead ground wire. An auger would be used to excavate a 5-foot-diameter hole for each pole. A corrugated metal pipe would be permanently installed in each hole to stabilize the soils. Soil and gravel would be used to backfill the hole after installation of the poles.

Additionally, a new ground mat would be installed 18 inches below the surface of the electrical yard expansion area, to protect electrical equipment from lightning strikes. The ground mat would extend 3 feet outside of the substation fence.

Approximately, 650 linear feet of ground would be excavated in the electrical yard of the substation, near the control house, to install an additional length of a pre-cast concrete trench system to connect electrical wires from the new capacitor yard to new controls and alarms inside the control house.

A new 850-feet-long by 10-feet-wide drainage ditch would be installed just outside the new substation fence on the east and northern sides, which would drain into pre-settling ponds. The stormwater would be conveyed through two new pipes to an infiltration pond that would be installed on the western side of the facility. The pre-settling ponds would be approximately 125 feet long by 20 feet wide by 10 feet deep. The stormwater infiltration pond would be 400 feet long by 10 feet wide by 10 feet deep.

About 220 linear feet of an existing fence and one double swing gate would be removed. A new interior 65 foot by 70 foot fence would be installed around each individual shunt capacitor. Each fence enclosure would have six 7-foot-tall by 10-foot-wide swing gates and one 7-foot-tall by 4-foot-wide swing gate. A new fence, approximately 240 feet long by 300 feet wide, would be installed around the perimeter of the substation expansion area. This fence would have two 8-foot-tall by 20-foot-wide double swing gates for vehicular access. Fence and gateposts would be installed to a depth of 4 to 5 feet.

A new gravel road, 12 to 16-feet wide by 1,300 feet long, would be constructed outside the new substation fence.

A new 65-feet-long by 30-feet-wide parking area would be installed to the southeast of the new shunt capacitors. The parking area would fit up to five vehicles for substation operators and maintenance staff.

The project would require approximately 750 cubic yards of soil removal and 6,000 cubic yards of fill material. The removed soil would be used onsite as part of the fill or would be disposed of at a BPA approved landfill.

See Table 1: Equipment Footings and Dimensions below for a full list of equipment type, number of footings and excavation dimensions for those footings

Table 1—Equipment Footings and Dimensions

Equipment Type	**Number of Footings**	**Excavation Dimensions for Footings** (Length by Width by Depth)
Power Circuit Breaker	4	9 feet by 9 feet by 2 feet
Bus pedestals (Bus=rigid conductor)	36	6 feet by 6 feet by 5 feet 5 feet by 5 feet by 5 feet
Disconnect Switch	4	13 feet by 7 feet by 3 feet
Current Limiting Reactor	12	6.5 feet by 6.5 feet by 2.5 feet
Capacitor Rack	3	24 feet by 9 feet by 2 feet
Concrete Pier Foundation for Engineered Steel Poles for Overhead Ground Wire	4	5 feet diameter by 21 feet deep
Trenching for Utilities, if needed	NA	3 feet deep
Stormwater Detention Pond	NA	400 feet by 10 feet by 10 feet 125 feet by 20 feet by 10 feet
Groundmat	NA	Extends 3 feet out from substation fence line. 18 inches deep
Fiber Vault	NA	5 feet by 5 feet by 5 feet

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]

[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*.

BETH BELANGER

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Beth Belanger
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

KATEY GRANGE

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Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment: 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: La Pine Substation Shunt Capacitor Expansion

Project Site Description

The project location is 2.5 miles east of La Pine, Oregon in Deschutes County. The project site is within Section 18, Township 22 South, Range 11 East and the proposed timber decking and slash management locations are in Sections 16 and 17, Township 22 South, Range 11 East. The project location is currently developed with BPA's La Pine electrical substation yard and control house, encompassing 4.3 acres. The substation is on the Deschutes National Forest. BPA's transmission lines are located just east of the substation. Midstate Electric Cooperative (MEC) owns a transmission line that is orientated north to south and enters the substation on the west side. The proposed project area is to the north, northwest and west of the existing substation and includes a portion of MEC's ROW.

The nearest waterbody is an unnamed intermittent stream located 0.8 miles to the south. The nearest documented National Inventory Wetlands are located 2.5 miles to the west. No wetlands or waterbodies were discovered during a plant and wildlife survey for the project.

In late June 2024, the "Darlene 3" wildfire burned through the project area, including the proposed decking locations. The fire did not directly impact the LaPine Substation due to wildfire containment efforts that included dropping fire retardant around the perimeter of the substation electrical yard; however, most of the trees proposed for removal are now dead.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: On February 16, 2023, BPA sent initiation of consultation letters to the Burns Paiute Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation, Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for the overall project. On March 12th, 2023, SHPO gave notice of receipt of consultation materials. A cultural survey of the project area took place in June 2023. The BPA archaeologist and historian made a determination of no adverse effect to historic resources. The determination and report were sent to the consulting parties on February 09, 2024. The report was later amended to add geotechnical, soil resistivity and infiltration testing within the area of potential effect and was resent to the consulting parties on April 16, 2024. The Klamath Tribe was inadvertently omitted from the original list of consulting parties but was added to the distribution of the amended report. Another letter was sent to the consulting parties on December 9, 2024, to capture additional project areas, including the Zayo Fiber regen facility removal and work within the electrical yard, along with the timber decking locations that had been previously surveyed by USFS archaeologists. The determination of no adverse effect to historic resources remained. The

Oregon SHPO responded and concurred with BPA's determination on May 14th , 2024 and December 26th, 2024. No other responses were received.

Notes: If any cultural resources are discovered during project implementation, all project related activities in the area would stop and BPA's post-review discovery protocol would be implemented and the appropriate parties, including the BPA archaeologist and USFS, would be notified.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: There would be minimal impacts to geology and soils in the project area. Approximately 750 cubic yards of native soil would be excavated during construction. Most would be used to backfill excavation areas. Soils would be graded and compacted during site preparation. Several electrical grounding wells would be removed and backfilled with cement grout, in accordance with Oregon regulations for well abandonment.

Notes:

- Develop and implement an erosion control plan for construction to prevent soil erosion.
- Dispose of excess soils at an approved BPA-approved disposal site.
- Mulch and revegetate exposed soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: A 2023 plant survey determined that the project area had no Federal or state special-status plants or habitats that would be impacted by the project. Of the 335 trees proposed for removal, 256 are now dead from a 2024 wildfire that burned through the project area. The project would remove approximately 2.6 acres of plant habitat to develop the substation expansion area.

Notes:

- Require vehicles and equipment to be cleaned before entering the site to avoid introduction of invasive plant species.
- Use USFS-approved weed-free sources of rock, gravel, and straw to prevent introduction of invasive plant species.
- Revegetate any post-construction bare-ground areas with USFS-approved seed mix.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project would permanently remove approximately 2.6 acres of habitat; however, there are expansive forested areas surrounding the project location, which could be used by wildlife. Construction activities may temporarily disturb and displace wildlife.

Construction activities and removal of habitat may have small negative impacts on the following USFS management indicator species but continued viability of these species is expected: Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), Northern goshawk (*A. gentilis*), sharp-shinned hawk (*A. striatus*), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), Northern flicker (*Colaptes auratus*), Lewis's woodpecker (*Melanerpes lewis*), black-backed woodpecker (*Picoides arcticus*), hairy woodpecker (*P. villosus*), elk (*Cervus candensis*), and mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*).

Construction activities and removal of habitat may impact individual species or habitat of the following federal sensitive species but would not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species: Lewis's woodpecker,

white-headed woodpecker (*P. albolarvatus*), pallid bat (*Antrozous pallidus*), gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), fringed myotis (*Myotis thysanodes*), Morrison's bumblebee (*Bombus morrisoni*), Western bumblebee (*B. occidentalis*), Suckley's cuckoo bumblebee (*B. suckleyi*), Johnson's hairstreak (*Callophrys johnsoni*), and monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*).

The site may be used by dispersing gray wolves; however, there are not any suitable denning habitat or areas where wolves would rendezvous, in or near, the project location. The project may affect but is not likely to adversely affect wolves. BPA consulted with the US Fish and Wildlife Service in the fall of 2024. On December 20, 2024, US Fish and Wildlife Service concurred with BPA's determination of effects to wolves.

Notes:

- Tree felling would occur prior to April 15th to avoid impacts to nesting migratory birds.
- If active Northern goshawk, Cooper's hawk, sharp-shinned hawk or red-tailed hawk nests are discovered within a ¼ mile of the project area, the USFS wildlife biologist would be contacted and activities within ¼ mile of the nest site would cease until evaluated by the district biologist and the appropriate seasonal restrictions are applied.
- If a wolf den is discovered during project implementation all project activities within one mile of the den would stop, while BPA coordinates with USFS, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and US Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure seasonal restrictions and protective measures are in place.
- Remove garbage regularly from site to deter unwanted wildlife activity at site. Use locking garbage containers, if necessary.
- Cover construction holes and trenches left overnight to prevent accidental trapping of wildlife.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no water bodies, floodplains or fish within or near the project area; therefore, there would be no impacts to any Federal or state special-status species, or habitats.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands in or adjacent to the project location; therefore, there would be no impacts to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project area is 140 miles southeast of the Troutdale Aquifer System, near Vancouver, Washington. The maximum depth of disturbance would be 21 feet deep for pole installation. There would be no impacts to groundwater or aquifers.

Notes:

- Utilize existing Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasure Plan for the substation.
- Have a complete spill kit onsite during construction.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA would not proceed with work until the Deschutes National Forest issues a notice to proceed and/or a revised special-use permit for the proposed substation expansion. Approximately 2.6 acres of forested land, including a portion of Midstate Electric Cooperative's transmission right-of-way, and existing access roads would be converted for the substation expansion. There are no specially-designated areas that would be impacted by the project.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The substation expansion would be consistent with the existing use of the surrounding area, as a substation and transmission right-of-way.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions would occur during construction; however, there would be no substantial changes to air quality during or after construction.

Notes:

- Prepare and implement a fugitive dust control plan.
- Limit vehicle speeds on unpaved roads and surfaces to 15 miles per hour to reduce dust.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours. There are no adjacent residential or commercial properties that would be affected by construction noise. Operation noise would not change significantly after project completion.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: During construction, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Project activities would not impact human health or safety.

Notes:

- Secure the work area at the end of each workday, as much as possible to protect the public and safeguard equipment.
- Develop and implement a site-specific Safety Plan prior to starting construction.

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 to coordinate with the underlying land manager, USFS. There are no other adjacent land owners that would need to be notified or coordinated with.

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

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