Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: Targhee Substation Breaker Installation and Transfer Trip Upgrades

Project No.: P03589

Project Manager: Mike Henjum, TEPS-TPP-1

Location: Bonneville, Fremont, and Teton counties, Idaho and Teton County, Wyoming

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine maintenance; B1.7 Electronic equipment; B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to install a new 115-kilovolt (kV) power circuit breaker (PCB) and to complete additional equipment upgrades at Targhee Substation near Driggs, Teton County, Idaho. BPA also proposes equipment upgrades and to improve transfer trip schemes at the following sites:

- Targhee Tap Switching Station near Victor, Teton County, Idaho
- Victor Substation (owned by Fall River Rural Electric Co-op, Inc [Fall River]) near Victor, Teton County, Idaho
- Swan Valley Substation near Swan Valley, Bonneville County, Idaho
- Teton Substation near Wilson, Teton County, Wyoming
- Drummond Substation (owned by Fall River) near Drummond, Fremont County, Idaho

The project is required to reduce the impact on Fall River's system due to faults on the 115-kV Swan Valley-Teton No. 1 transmission line and the 115-kV Targhee Tap to Swan Valley-Teton No. 1 transmission line. The Federal Columbia River Transmission System Act directs BPA to construct improvements, additions, and replacements to its transmission system that are necessary to maintain electrical stability and reliability, as well as to provide service to BPA's customers (16 United States Code [U.S.C] § 838b(b-d)).

At Targhee Substation, an existing disconnect switch on Targhee Tap to Swan Valley-Teton No. 1 would be removed, and a new PCB, including breaker disconnect switches and a bypass disconnect switch, would be installed. Fall River's existing PCB and three associated disconnects would also be removed and replaced. In addition, several wood pole structures located within the substation would be replaced with 3-pole wood deadend structures with direct embed foundations and guy wires and new overhead conductor and shield wire.

To provide adequate space for the new equipment, the substation yard would be expanded approximately 2.1 acres to the south. Expanding the substation yard would require clearing

vegetation and excavating up to approximately 5 feet deep to install grounding, pre-cast trench or conduit to house cable and/or piping, stormwater drainage, concrete footings for the new substation equipment, and deadend structures. Excavated areas would be backfilled using previously-excavated soils and/or imported fill material, compacted and graded flat, and resurfaced with crushed rock. The expansion area would be enclosed with perimeter security fencing. In total, expanding the Targhee Substation yard would cause up to approximately 2.1 acres of permanent ground disturbance and an additional approximately 1.7 acres of temporary ground disturbance. Temporarily disturbed areas would be reseeded with a native, regionally-appropriate seed mix.

At the remaining project sites, BPA would remove, replace, upgrade, and/or modify outdoor equipment, including new capacitor voltage transformers, wave traps to block radio frequency signals, and/or termination cabinets. These actions would occur within the existing yards, and no excavation activities would extend beyond the perimeter previously disturbed during construction and installation of the substation or switch yard. In addition, electronic equipment would be removed, replaced, upgraded, and/or modified within the existing control houses to improve transfer trip schemes between all the sites and to support the new equipment installed at the various substations. Equipment would include line relays, communications equipment, and Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system equipment as well as associated equipment racks, cabinets, and wiring. At Victor Substation, BPA would acquire authorization from Fall River for the new wave trap.

Completion of the project would require the use of heavy equipment, such as an excavator, dump truck, grader, compactor, crane, and boom truck. All materials and equipment would be staged within existing graveled areas.

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; 89 FR 34074, April 30, 2024), 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]

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Walker Stinnette
Environmental Protection Specialist

[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*.

Concur:

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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: Targhee Substation Breaker Installation and Transfer Trip Upgrades

Project Site Description

The majority of the proposed action would occur at BPA's Targhee Substation located on BPA fee-owned property near Driggs, Teton County, Idaho (Township 5 North, Range 45 East, Section 35). The substation yard expansion would occur in an area that was formerly a pasture and is vegetated with common native and non-native herbaceous species, including smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*), western wheatgrass (*Pascopyrum smithii*), Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*), common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), and Baltic rush (*Juncus balticus*), as well as a small stand of narrowleaf cottonwood (*Populus angustifolia*). Ground disturbance would also occur within the existing substation yard, which is previously disturbed and covered in crushed rock. A wetland delineation was conducted, and no wetlands were identified within the project site. A palustrine emergent wetland was identified outside of the yard expansion area to the south. An approximately 45-foot-long drainage ditch has been excavated around the eastern and southern boundaries of the substation and likely serves to manage stormwater runoff. No surface water was observed within the ditch. The surrounding area is primarily pastureland with residential and commercial properties located approximately 500 feet to the east.

All other work would occur inside of the existing control houses or within the existing substation or switch yards, which were previously disturbed and covered with gravel during the original construction. No vegetation, wildlife habitat, wetlands, or surface waters are present.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On August 15, 2023, BPA initiated National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 consultation with the following parties:

- Shoshone Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation
- Eastern Shoshone Tribe
- Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (Idaho SHPO)

BPA conducted background research and an intensive field survey of the Area of Potential Effects (APE), and no historic or cultural resources were identified within the APE. Therefore, on August 21, 2024, BPA determined, per 36 CFR 800.5(d)(1), that the implementation of the proposed undertaking would result in no adverse effect to historic properties (BPA Project No.: ID 2021 004; Idaho SHPO Rev. No. 2023-771). On

September 6, 2024, Idaho SHPO concurred with BPA's determination of no adverse effect to historic properties. No other comments were received from the consulting parties.

Notes:

- Implement the Post Review Discovery Procedure in the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during implementation. Discontinue all ground-disturbing activity in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA and in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: At Targhee Substation, expanding the substation yard would result in up to approximately 2.1 acres of permanent soil removal and loss of productivity. The proposed action could cause up to approximately 1.7 acres of temporary soil disturbance in areas beyond the expanded substation footprint where vehicles and equipment use would result in minor soil rutting and compaction. Standard construction best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented to minimize soil erosion, sedimentation, and fugitive dust. Temporarily disturbed soils would stabilize as vegetation is reestablished and would eventually return to pre-existing conditions following completion of the proposed action. All proposed actions at the remaining project sites would occur indoors or within the previously-disturbed and graveled yards. The proposed action would not impact geology.

Notes:

- Revegetate temporarily disturbed areas with a native, regionally-appropriate seed mix.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: At Targhee Substation, expanding the substation yard would permanently remove up to approximately 2.1 acres and would temporarily crush, strip, or bury up to approximately 1.7 acres of common native and non-native herbaceous species, including smooth brome, western wheatgrass, Kentucky bluegrass, common dandelion, and Baltic rush, as well as a small stand of narrowleaf cottonwood. Standard construction BMPs would be implemented to stabilize soils, re-establish vegetation, and minimize the spread of noxious weeds. Temporarily disturbed areas would be seeded and would eventually return to near pre-existing conditions following completion of the proposed action. All proposed actions at the remaining project sites would occur indoors or within the previously-disturbed and graveled yards, where no vegetation is present. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status plant species, including plants listed under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), near the project site.

Notes:

- Revegetate temporarily disturbed areas with a native, regionally-appropriate seed mix.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: At Targhee Substation, the proposed action would permanently remove up to approximately 2.1 acres and would temporarily disturb up to approximately 1.7 acres of potential wildlife habitat. At each of the project sites, minor and temporary wildlife disturbance could occur from elevated noise and human presence during construction. It is expected that most wildlife species that could be present would be able to avoid the project sites during construction and would likely reoccupy temporarily disturbed areas following

completion of the proposed action. No special-status wildlife species or wildlife species protected under the federal ESA are expected to occur near the project site.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The drainage ditch at Targhee Substation was likely constructed to manage stormwater runoff from the substation. No water was observed in the ditch during site visits in November 2022 or June 2023. No water bodies, floodplains, or fish-bearing streams are located within or near the project sites. Standard construction BMPs would reduce the potential for sediment to migrate off-site and into water bodies. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies and floodplains and would have no effect on special-status fish species or habitats.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The wetland identified to the south of the Targhee Substation yard expansion area would not be directly impacted by any ground disturbing work, and standard construction BMPs would prevent erosion and sedimentation from impacting the wetland. All proposed actions at the remaining project sites would occur indoors or within the previously-disturbed and graveled yards, where no wetlands are present. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact wetlands.

Notes:

- Install temporary fencing south of the Targhee Substation expansion area to prevent vehicles and equipment from entering the nearby wetland and to prevent sediment from migrating into the wetland.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: At Targhee Substation, ground excavation could reach depths to groundwater given the project site's proximity to wetlands. All proposed actions at the remaining project sites would occur indoors or would not reach depths to ground water. Standard construction BMPs would reduce the potential for inadvertent spills of hazardous materials that could contaminate groundwater or aquifers. Therefore, the proposed action would not permanently impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: At Targhee Substation, the proposed action would convert approximately 2.1 acres of former pastureland to a substation yard. The expansion would occur entirely on BPA fee-owned property and would be consistent with the existing transmission infrastructure land use at the site. All proposed actions at the remaining project sites would not require a change in land use. None of the project sites are located in a specially-designated area.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During construction, the presence of construction equipment and general construction activities, including vegetation disturbance, would cause temporary visual impacts. Expanding Targhee Substation on former pastureland would cause permanent visual impacts. However, the visual impact would be small given that the addition of substation equipment and yard space would be visually consistent with the existing utility infrastructure at the site and few individuals would likely notice these changes. Similarly, equipment modifications within the existing yards at Targhee Tap Switching Station and Victor Substation would constitute minor visual changes relative to the existing visual quality of these sites and would not be overtly noticeable.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would cause a minor and temporary increase in dust and emissions in the local area from general construction activities. At Targhee Substation, BPA would install new circuit breakers containing sulfur hexafluoride (SF6), a potent greenhouse gas for which there is no comparable industry alternative. BPA closely monitors SF6 emissions as part of regularly scheduled maintenance and inspection protocol, which allows BPA to rapidly detect and address leaks. The addition of SF6 circuit breakers would not substantially lead to additional SF6 emissions. Standard construction BMPs would suppress dust. There would be no significant long-term change in air quality following completion of the proposed action.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would result in minor and temporary noise from the use of vehicles and equipment and general construction activities, which would intermittently exceed current ambient conditions. At Targhee Substation, construction noise could be audible from one residential property located approximately 500 feet from the project site. However, construction would occur during daylight hours (approximately 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM), and construction noise would attenuate substantially over that distance. At the remaining sites, construction would be completed within a few days, and construction noise is not expected to be overtly noticeable from adjacent properties. There would be no permanent change in noise following completion of the proposed action. Therefore, the proposed action would not result in significant noise impacts.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All standard safety protocols would be followed throughout implementation of the proposed action to minimize risk to human health and safety. Therefore, 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: The proposed action would occur on property where BPA has acquired (or would acquire) all necessary rights. BPA would notify and be in coordination with property owners as necessary throughout the proposed action. No additional 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.

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