

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Boundary Substation Security, Fence Replacement, and Erosion Protection

Project No.: P06044

Project Manager: Darin Bowman – TEPS – TPP – 1

Location: Pend Oreille County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.11 Fencing, B1.3 Routine Maintenance, and B2.2 Building and equipment installation

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to update erosion and sediment control protections and replace existing damaged perimeter fence, install new medium security fencing, ground grid, vehicle and man gates, physical access control system and all associated infrastructure at the Boundary Substation. The Boundary Substation is in Pend Oreille County, WA in the BPA Spokane District. A total of approximately 3,000 linear feet of fencing, 3,500 feet of ground grid, five gates, two additional man gates, hydraulic vertical pivot gate, two dual card readers and a concrete radiant heat system would be installed. The existing seven-foot-tall fence would be removed including the compromised in-ground concrete curbing. Eight-foot-tall cut and climb-resistant steel-mesh security fence topped with three strands of barbed wire would be installed around the perimeter of the site with newly designed footings to reduce the impacts from frost and thaw. The disturbance for construction would be limited to the BPA transmission facility boundaries in which vegetation growth is regularly managed by mechanical and chemical means. The Federal Columbia River Transmission System Act directs BPA to construct, acquire, operate, maintain, repair, relocate, and replace the transmission system, including facilities and structures appurtenant thereto. (16 United States Code [U.S.C] § 838i(b)). The Administrator is further charged with maintaining electrical stability and reliability, selling transmission and interconnection services, and providing service to BPA's customers. (16 U.S.C § 838b(b-d)). The Administrator is also authorized to conduct electrical research, development, experimentation, tests, and investigation related to construction, operation, and maintenance of transmission systems and facilities. (16 U.S.C § 838i(b)(3)).

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

/s/ Adrienne Wojtasz

Adrienne Wojtasz

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: March 12, 2025

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.

Proposed Action: Boundary Substation Security, Fence Replacement, and Erosion Protection

Project Site Description

Boundary Substation is located in Township 40 North, Range 43 East, Section 10 in Pend Oreille County, Washington. The site is approximately 1.2 miles south from the Canadian Border, 7 miles north of Metaline Falls, WA, and 0.3 miles west of the Pend Oreille River. The surrounding area is predominately conifer forests with mixed strands of western red cedar and western hemlock.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Pursuant to its responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and implementing regulations 36 CFR 800, BPA initiated consultation with the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), Coeur d'Alene Tribe, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, the Kalispel Tribe of Indians, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, the Spokane Tribe of Indians on December 23, 2024. BPA has previously determined that the Boundary Substation is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places with DAHP concurrence. DAHP concurred with the Area of Potential Effect and the finding of no adverse effect to historic properties on January 7, 2025. No other responses were received within 30 days.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural resources or historic properties are inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, BPA will require that work be halted 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 with conditions

Explanation: There would be minimal soil disturbance for installation of the fencing, gates, and ground grid. All work is occurring at the established Boundary substation property with disturbance limited to existing perimeter of the substation, and for short distances inside and outside the substation yard. Standard construction control measures would be utilized as necessary.

Notes:

- Utilize Best Management Practices (BMPs) to limit soil transport by wind and water during construction.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: The project would occur in the BPA Boundary substation perimeter areas that are currently managed for low-growing or no vegetation. Some brush may be cleared where needed for construction. There would be no effect to ESA-listed or other sensitive plant species.

Notes:

- Re-seed any cleared areas with a BPA-approved seed mix where necessary.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area does not include habitat for any Federal or State special-status species. There would be no effect to ESA-listed species in the area. Project activities would be limited to the already impacted Boundary Substation and would not substantially alter the footprint or operational noise of the substation; therefore, wildlife and associated habitat would not be affected.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Erosion control best management practices combined with the distance to the nearest waterbody (0.3 miles) would ensure that sedimentation would not enter into any waterbody.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are documented within the project area.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not impact groundwater or aquifers. Infiltration to groundwater and aquifers would not be adversely impacted by the construction as runoff and erosion at the site would be controlled.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use. No specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be limited changes to the project area or surrounding environment. The completed work with the new fence and security enhancements may be noticeable, but

would be consistent with the visual appearance of the existing substation and would constitute a small overall change to the current visual state.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have a temporary impact on air quality from a small amount of vehicle emissions and dust generated during construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be temporary construction noise. Operational noise of the substation would not change.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Workers on the project would be required to follow all applicable state and/or Federal safety standards as much of the work would occur from inside the substation boundary.

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: Boundary Substation is a BPA-owned substation, and the project site is accessed by county roads. No notification 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: /s/ Adrienne Wojtasz
Adrienne Wojtasz
Physical Scientist

Date: March 12, 2025