

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Fiber Optic Cable Installation at Marion Substation

**Project No.:** LURR20240159

**Project Manager:** Candias Davis, TERR-CHEMAWA

**Location:** Marion County, Oregon

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way, B4.7 Fiber Optic Cable

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to grant an easement, and to allow Stayton Cooperative Telephone Company (SCTC) to repair and install new fiber optic cable on BPA fee-owned property at BPA's Marion Substation near Stayton, Marion County, Oregon.

At the southwest end of the substation property, near the intersection of Baler Lane and Old Mehama Road SE, new fiber optic cable would be spliced into existing fiber that parallels Old Mehama Road SE. The new cable would be installed within an about 20-foot-wide area either alongside or within Baler Lane, a gravel access road that runs parallel to the substation's western and northern perimeter chain-link fences. The 2,000 linear feet of new fiber optic cable would be installed via directional boring, with up to eight temporary entry and exit bore pits. Trenching may also be used to install the fiber in areas where directional boring is not feasible. Trenches would be up to 2 feet wide and approximately 3 feet deep. Actions may also include the replacement and repair of existing SCTC fiber optic lines in the project area.

Up to five new customer vaults (about 2 feet wide by 3 feet long and up to 4 feet deep) would be installed about 800 feet apart along the 2,000-foot-long installation path paralleling Baler Lane.

The fiber optic cable and new 20-foot-wide easement would continue north alongside Baler Lane, off of the BPA fee-owned parcel.

Construction vehicles and equipment would park on roadside grass areas, but no new gravel staging areas would be created. No equipment would be left overnight in the right -of-way.

BPA authorizes the use of and manages its fee-owned lands pursuant to its authority under sections 2(e) and 2(f) of the Bonneville Project Act. 16 U.S.C. § 832a(e)-(f).

**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.<sup>1</sup>

Jessica A. Heppler  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

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<sup>1</sup> BPA is aware that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), on February 25, 2025, issued an interim final rule to remove its NEPA implementing regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500–1508. Based on CEQ guidance, and to promote completion of its NEPA review in a timely manner and without delay, in this CX BPA is voluntarily relying on the CEQ regulations, in addition to DOE's own regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021, to meet its 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:** Fiber Optic Cable Installation at Marion Substation

## **Project Site Description**

The project site is located on BPA fee-owned property at BPA's Marion Substation near Stayton in Marion County, Oregon (T9S R1E DC46). Depending on the final route, the fiber optic cable would be installed parallel to, or in some instances underneath Baler Lane, in an area where existing underground utilities have previously been installed. The immediate areas to the east, west, and north of the project site are mixed agricultural crop lands and undeveloped wooded land, with some rural residences to the south of the project area. Ground cover within the project site consists primarily of regularly mowed, low growing herbaceous vegetation including native and non-native species. The western edge of the project area has a mixture of tree and shrub species present, including white oak (*Quercus garryana*), beaked hazelnut (*Corylus cornuta*), and Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*). Plant species observed during the site visit included Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*), Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), and Common snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*). According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service, soils at the project site are primarily composed of McAlpin silty clay loam, which is not hydric. The National Wetland Inventory does not indicate any wetlands present within or near the project area. However, there are seasonally wet drainage ditches that run parallel to Baler Road in the project area.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: The BPA archaeologist initiated Section 106 consultation on September 30, 2024, with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon (CTWSRO), and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). On September 30, 2024, SHPO responded via email, assigning the project SHPO case No. 25-0766.

On January 28, 2025, the BPA archaeologist notified the consulting parties of BPA's determination that implementation of the proposed undertaking would result in no effect to historic properties. The CTWSRO concurred on February 27, 2025, and the SHPO concurred on February 28, 2025. BPA did not receive any other responses.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Ground-disturbing activities may include a mix of trenching, excavating boring entry and exit pits, and excavating holes for vaults. In addition, use of vehicles and heavy equipment may result in minor soil compaction. The proposed action would not

permanently impact geology and soils. SCTC would be responsible for implementing standard construction best management practices (BMPs) to address temporary erosion and sediment control.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions.

Explanation: Use of vehicles, equipment, and excavation may result in temporary removal of herbaceous ground cover in some areas. No permanent impacts to trees or shrubs are anticipated. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status plant species or plant species protected under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), and no special-status species were observed during a site visit on October 28, 2024. The vegetated areas that would be temporarily disturbed contain a variety of both native and non-native grasses and other low growing plant species. Areas that would be temporarily disturbed by trenching or boring activities would be revegetated soon after project completion. Therefore, the impact to general vegetation is expected to be low because disturbed areas would be reseeded after installation.

No special-status plant species or suitable habitat for special-status plant species are present within the project area. Therefore, the proposed action would have no effect on special-status plant species.

Notes: Upon project completion, the applicant would reseed the temporarily disturbed areas with seed mixes that are regionally appropriate for the area.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions.

Explanation: There are no documented occurrences of special-status wildlife species or suitable habitat present in the project area. Minor and temporary disturbance of common wildlife species could occur from elevated noise during construction. Because the work would be occurring adjacent to a currently operating substation and ongoing agricultural activities, any wildlife present are likely used to human presence and noise. There are seasonally wet drainage ditches that run parallel to Baler Road that may attract generalist aquatic-breeding amphibian species when standing water is present.

Therefore, the proposed project may have a temporary, and low-impact on general wildlife species during construction activities, but the proposed action would not have a permanent impact on special-status wildlife species or habitats.

Notes: BMPs such as erosion control measures would prevent sediment from entering the ditch to protect the habitat functions.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: The project area does not contain any water bodies, floodplains, fish, or fish habitat. However, a seasonally wet drainage ditch runs parallel to Baler Road. Construction BMPs would be implemented to protect the drainage and habitat functions of the existing ditch. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact water bodies, floodplains, fish, or fish habitat.

### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: The project area does not contain any wetlands, and the National Resource Conservation Service indicates no hydric soils present in the project area. No evidence of wetlands or wetland reliant species were observed during a site visit conducted on October 28, 2024. Therefore, the project would not have an impact on wetlands.

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions.

Explanation: Ground disturbance is unlikely to reach depths to groundwater and no new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers are proposed. Standard construction BMPs would prevent impacts from unintended spills to groundwater or aquifers. Therefore, the proposed action would not have an impact on groundwater or aquifers.

Notes: Maintain an oil/fuel spill kit on-site during construction to address containment, cleanup, and disposal in the event of a spill.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: The land use of the project area is currently a graveled access road to the Marion Substation and roadside vegetation with existing underground utilities. There would be no change in land use at the project site. No other specially designated areas are in the project vicinity.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Most areas where soil is excavated, and vegetation is temporarily disturbed would be revegetated to pre-existing vegetative conditions. The fiber optic cable trench and/or handholes would be underground or flush with the ground surface. The proposed project would not alter the visual quality of the area.

## **10. Air Quality**

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Temporary and minor dust and vehicle emissions would increase in the local area from vehicle and equipment use during project implementation. There would be no long-term impact to air quality following completion of the project.

## **11. Noise**

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: Project-related noise would be temporary and intermittent and would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise would not change from current ambient conditions.

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

Potential for Significance: No.

Explanation: The project would not generate or use hazardous materials and would not create conditions that would increase risk to human health and safety. No impact to human health and safety is expected as a result of project activities.

### **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 project would occur on BPA fee-owned property. The applicant would be responsible for notifying adjacent landowners prior to commencing work, if required.

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

Signed:

Jessica A. Heppler  
Environmental Protection Specialist