

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: New Battery Building Installation at Garrison Substation

Project No.: P02397

Project Manager: Ken Willhite – TEPS-TPP-1

Location: Powell County, Montana

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.15 Support buildings

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to install a new battery building and complete associated battery equipment upgrades at the Garrison Substation. The new battery building would be installed within the existing substation yard just southeast of the existing Relay and Control Building. The building would be wood frame construction with a reinforced concrete slab on grade foundation approximately 3 feet deep, with finishes including pre-finished metal siding and a standing seam metal roof. The structure would measure approximately 36 feet long, 15 feet wide, and 10 feet tall. Installation would require excavation of an approximately 12-foot by 30-foot area for a shallow concrete stem-wall foundation. The building would be designed to replicate the look of the adjacent Garrison Substation 500KV Relay Building constructed in 2005. The project would occur within the Garrison Substation, constructed in 1983, on an artificial elevated landform that has been heavily modified from the construction of the substation and various existing and below ground utilities. No perimeter fence expansion would be required.

The proposed project would help provide back-up power for the substation to support transmission system operations. 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), 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

Christopher H. Furey
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

¹ 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: New Battery Building Installation at Garrison Substation

Project Site Description

The project site is at the BPA Garrison Substation in Powell County, Montana. The site is located in Township 9 North, Range 10 West, Section 20. The site is about 4 miles west of the town of Garrison, Montana. The surrounding topography beyond the substation yard consists of primarily flat and rolling land with neighboring parcels comprised of cleared ranch lands and some lightly forested areas. Some agricultural and residential development exists about 4 miles east of the substation near the town of Garrison. Some wetland areas adjacent to Independence Creek are located about 1700 feet south of Garrison Substation.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The BPA archaeologist reviewed the proposed activities and determined that these activities at the project area within the fenced substation for the installation of the premanufactured battery building do not have potential to cause effects to historic or cultural resources.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be some soil disturbance for the excavation needed to install the premanufactured building within the substation fenced area. Work would be occurring at the established substation property.

Notes:

- Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be implemented to limit soil transport by wind.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would be occurring in the BPA substation perimeter in a graveled area that is currently managed for no vegetation. There are no listed or special-status species present.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The work would be occurring within an established BPA substation. Construction of the premanufactured building is expected to occur at daytime hours at the substation with no effect to any listed or special-status species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Independence Creek is over 1,700 feet south of the Garrison Substation. There would be no in-water work occurring and construction would not be near the creek.

Notes:

- Utilize applicable BMPs to limit wind erosion of soils during construction.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Wetland areas are located adjacent to Independence Creek located about 1,700 feet south of the substation. Work would be within the substation fence perimeter. Project construction would avoid wetland areas.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not be expected to impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project work would take place within the Garrison Substation perimeter consistent with activities at large substations.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be limited visual changes to the project area or surrounding environment. The completed construction of the premanufactured battery building may be noticeable but would constitute a small overall change to the current visual status of the substation.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions would occur during installation. Dust would be kept to a minimum in adhering to BMPs for ground-disturbing activities.

Notes:

- Utilize applicable BMPs to limit wind erosion of soils during construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours. No ongoing noise increases.

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 the construction work would occur from inside the substation grounds.

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: Any removed batteries would be recycled at an appropriate facility.

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: Garrison is a BPA substation and no additional coordination is required.

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

Signed:

Christopher H. Furey
Environmental Protection Specialist