

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: T-Mobile Union Hill Telecommunications Equipment Upgrade

Project No.: W1035

Project Manager: Brian Keith, TELP-TPP-3

Location: King County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.19 Microwave, Meteorological, and Radio Towers; B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow T-Mobile to upgrade its telecommunications equipment located at structure 20/1 on the Monroe-Novelty Hill No. 1 Transmission Line in King County, Washington. Telecommunications equipment would be installed on an existing transmission structure and within the fenced equipment compound located at the base of the structure.

On the existing transmission structure, BPA on T-Mobile's behalf would:

- Relocate three antennas
- Relocate six remote radio units (RRUs)
- Install three new antennas
- Install three new antenna mast pipes and crossover plates
- Install 150 feet of hybrid cable and 6/24 hybrid trunk

Within the existing ground-level equipment compound, T-Mobile would:

- Remove three equipment cabinets
- Remove ice bridge section
- Install two new equipment cabinets and associated equipment
- Install one new telco cabinet
- Install new 10-foot ice bridge
- Install one new electrical panel
- Install new service lighting

Ground disturbing activities include installing conduit in a trench adjacent to the concrete pad inside the equipment area. The trench would be two feet wide, a minimum of three feet deep, and approximately 21 feet long. All work would occur on the existing transmission structure or underneath the structure within the existing, graveled equipment compound. The site would be accessed via existing routes of travel.

BPA leases space on its transmission structures for wireless antenna facilities 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.¹

Jeremy Doschka
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.

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Project Site Description

The project site is located at structure 20/1 on the Monroe-Novelt Hill No. 1 transmission line right-of-way (ROW) in King County, Washington (Township 26 North, Range 6 East, Section 35). The transmission line ROW is in easement on private land. The project site is located near a developed equestrian center with low-density residential development within forested areas in the vicinity. Vegetation at the project site consists of low growing grasses, forbs, and weeds. No wetlands or waters are located within or near the project site.

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 State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, Puyallup Tribe of Indians, and Snoqualmie Indian Tribe on February 25, 2025. BPA had previously determined that the Monroe-Novelt Hill No. 1 Transmission Line is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places with DAHP concurrence. BPA did not identify any other known historic properties in the Area of Potential Effect (APE).

DAHP concurred with the APE and the finding of no adverse effect to historic properties on February 26, 2025. No other responses were received during the 30-day consultation period.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The only ground disturbing activities from the proposed action would be from trenching inside the equipment compound next to the concrete pad. Trenching would cover approximately 42 square feet. Temporarily disturbed soils would eventually stabilize as vegetation becomes reestablished following completion of the proposed action. No impacts to geology would occur.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would likely crush, remove, or cover grasses, forbs, and weeds from trenching and installation activities near the structure and equipment compound. Temporarily disturbed areas would eventually revegetate following completion of the

proposed action. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status plant species within or near the project site, and no suitable special-status species habitat is present.

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

Potential for Significance:

Explanation: Minor and temporary wildlife disturbance could occur from elevated noise and human presence during implementation of the proposed action. However, wildlife species that could be present in the area would likely be habituated to this level of disturbance given the surrounding area consists of residential areas and a nearby equestrian center. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status wildlife species near the project site, and no suitable special-status species habitat is present.

Notes:

- If any active nests are found on structure 6/5, the project would be delayed until the environmental lead confirms that the nest is unoccupied.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No water bodies, floodplains, or fish habitat is located within or near the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies or floodplains and would have no effect on special status fish species or habitat.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present within or near the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Excavation is unlikely to reach depths that would intersect groundwater; the proposed action would not generate or use hazardous materials that would contaminate groundwater or aquifers, if present. No new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers are proposed. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would take place at an existing transmission structure with existing wireless network equipment already in place. No changes in land use are proposed and the project site is not located within a specially-designated areas, therefore no impacts to land use or specially-designated areas are expected.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During construction, the installation of equipment and general construction activities would cause temporary visual impacts. However, the long-term visual impacts would be

consistent with the existing uses of the site as the new equipment being installed is similar to the existing telecommunications equipment on the structure.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would produce minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions in the local area. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the proposed action.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would produce some minor construction-related noise but would be temporary and during daylight hours (approximately 7 AM to 7 PM). There would be no long-term change in ambient noise following completion of the proposed action.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not generate or use hazardous materials. Decommissioned equipment would be removed from the site. 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: T-Mobile would be responsible for contacting and coordinating with the landowner prior to beginning project activities onsite.

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

Signed:

Jeremy Doschka
Environmental Protection Specialist