

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Verizon Wireless Vault and Fiber Installation at Snohomish Substation

Project No.: LURR 20250038

Project Manager: Patrick Munyua, TERR - Snohomish

Location: Snohomish County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): 4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow Verizon and its contractors (the applicant) to install a communications vault, conduit, fiber optic cable, and new innerduct on BPA fee-owned land located near BPA's Snohomish Substation, Snohomish County, Washington.

The applicant would install a new 2-foot by 3-foot communication vault on the northeastern edge of BPA fee-owned property (property) and directionally bore approximately 640 feet to an existing vault located on the western edge of the property. The applicant would install 2-inch-diameter conduit, innerduct, and fiber optic cable approximately 3 feet underground. Two bore pits (4 feet length, width, and depth) would be excavated along the bore path to connect the east and west vaults. Additionally, the applicant would install approximately 260 feet of innerduct and fiber optic cable through existing conduit connecting the existing west vault to an equipment shelter to the north outside of the property. Construction equipment expected to be used during the proposed activities includes a bore machine, trucks, small excavator, and common construction equipment. Staging areas for equipment and materials would be located outside of BPA property.

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 1021.102 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; 90 FR 29676, July 3, 2025 [Interim Final Rule]) and *DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Implementing Procedures* (dated June 30, 2025), BPA has determined the following:

- 1) The proposed action fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021;
- 2) The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion; and
- 3) There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal (see attached Environmental Evaluation).

Based on these determinations, BPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.¹

Justin M. Olmsted
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 the interim final rule to revise DOE NEPA regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021 and NEPA Implementing Procedures (dated June 30, 2025), to meet its obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.

CC:

P. Munyua – TERR-Snohomish

J. Olmsted – ECT-4

K. Gutierrez – EHT-4

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Official File – EC (EQ-15)

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<https://portal.bud.bpa.gov/orgs/efw/KEC/tsrvcs/Projects/Verizon%20Wireless%20Vault%20and%20Fiber%20Installation%20at%20Snohomish%20Substation.docx>

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Evaluation

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 would be located on BPA fee-owned property outside the fenced perimeter of Snohomish Substation in Snohomish County, WA (Township 28 North, Range 5 East, Section 12). Existing fiber equipment within the project site includes a fiber vault and underground conduit on the northwest corner following the existing gravel road. The conduit runs from the vault to an equipment shack located outside of BPA fee-owned property. A wetland exists on the eastern side of the project site. Vegetation within the area consists of grasses, large thickets of Himalayan blackberry, other shrubs, and bordered by a mix of coniferous and deciduous trees. The project site is surrounded by private businesses and residential areas, including Snohomish High School approximately 0.25 mile to the south and the Snohomish River approximately 1 mile southwest.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated Section 106 consultation on September 17, 2025, with the Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe, the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe, the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians, the Tulalip Tribes, and the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP). On September 19, 2025, the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe concurred with BPA's delineation of the Area of Potential Effects (APE) and DAHP concurred with BPA's determination of No Historical Properties Affected. No additional responses were received within the 30-day review period.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during project implementation, BPA would require the applicant to halt construction in the vicinity of the finds until inspected and assessed by BPA and in consultation with the appropriate parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions would result in minor soil disturbance associated with excavating bore pits and installing a new fiber vault. Bore pits would be backfilled and excess spoils, if any, would be disposed of in upland areas on BPA property contoured to match the existing topography. Standard construction best management practices (BMPs) would be used for sediment control and soil stabilization. Overall, the proposed action would have minimal impact on soil and no impact on geology.

Notes:

- The applicant would not be authorized to dispose of any soil underneath existing transmission lines.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some vegetation would be removed, crushed, or trampled during construction; however, the applicant would reseed all disturbed areas with a regionally appropriate seed mix following construction. There are no documented occurrences of federal or state special-status species within the project site. Overall, there would be minimal impact to plants.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The surrounding area is developed with commercial and residential properties where wildlife in the area would likely be habituated to human noise and construction activity. During construction, wildlife that may be present would be expected to avoid the project site. There are no occurrences of Federal or state-listed species or habitats within the project site. Therefore, impact to wildlife would be temporary and minimal.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no water bodies, floodplains, or fish-bearing streams within the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact these resources.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: A wetland is present in the project site; however, the applicant would directionally bore underneath the sensitive area. All entry and exit points for boring would be located in upland areas. Therefore, the proposed action would not be expected to impact the wetland. If impacts become unavoidable, the applicant would halt construction in the vicinity and coordinate with the appropriate agencies.

Notes:

- Ensure wetland boundaries are visibly marked during construction.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed actions would not result in any new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers. The applicant would not be authorized to store hazardous materials or refuel equipment on BPA fee-owned property. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact 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 proposed actions would not change the existing land use or any specially-designated areas in the vicinity. Therefore, there would be no impact to these resources.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary visual impacts would result during construction, but impacts would be minimal. The new vault would not be readily visible to the public and conduit would be

installed using a trenchless method which would reduce lingering visual impacts. Overall, the proposed actions would have minimal impact on the visual quality of the area.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor dust and vehicle emissions would result from the proposed actions, but these would be temporary and end following the completion of the proposed actions. No permanent changes to air quality would occur.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Sporadic and temporary construction noise would occur throughout the proposed action; however, activities would occur during daylight hours, and noise would return to existing conditions following construction completion. Therefore, temporary but minimal impact to noise would result due to the proposed actions.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The applicant would follow BPA and OSHA safety standards and would submit a safety plan for BPA's review and approval prior to commencing construction work onsite. The project would not create new safety hazards or use materials that could threaten human health and safety. No new impacts to human health and safety are anticipated.

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.

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

Signed:

Justin M. Olmsted
Environmental Protection Specialist