

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Grand Coulee Substation 230-kV and 500-kV Switchyard Fence and Yard Rock Upgrades

Project No.: P02577

Project Manager: Michael Henjum, TEPS-TPP-1

Location: Douglas and Grant counties, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B2.5 Facility safety and environmental improvements; B1.3 Routine Maintenance

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to add interior fencing and add additional base rock within the Grand Coulee Substation 230-kilovolt (kV) and 500-kV switchyards. The proposed project is needed to meet BPA's required safety standards.

BPA is proposing to install new chain-link fence with access gates inside the 230-kV and 500-kV switchyards to cordon off the control houses and parking areas from the energized yards. Between existing perimeter fences and buildings, approximately 700 linear feet of new fence at the 230-kV yard and approximately 860 linear feet of new fence at the 500-kV yard would be installed.

BPA is also proposing to add approximately 3 inches of base rock within the boundaries of the 230-kV and 500-kV switchyards to provide additional insulation to the ground mat.

General equipment used for the proposed project work includes post-hole diggers, vacuum trucks, pickup trucks, dump trucks, and bulldozers.

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 1021.102 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 the current *DOE National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Procedures*, 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.

Laura Roberts
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Evaluation

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Evaluation

This evaluation 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 proposed project is in central Washington along the Columbia Plateau at approximately 1,700 to 2,000 feet above sea level. The project area occurs within existing switchyards. The general area surrounding the switchyards consists of an existing electrical transmission right-of-way that contains multiple transmission lines and shrub-steppe habitat. Within a mile of the project area, several more densely populated areas occur adjacent to the Columbia River; however, no surface waters occur in the vicinity of the project. Project location and land ownership are listed below.

Township	Range	Section	Ownership
28N	30E	2	Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)
29N	30E	34	BOR

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated consultation with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation and the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) on January 14, 2026. BPA determined that the proposed undertaking would result in no adverse effect to historic properties. BPA received concurrence of its determination from DAHP on January 15, 2026. No other comments were received during the 30-day response period.

Notes:

- In the unlikely event that cultural material is inadvertently encountered during the implementation of this project, work would be halted in the vicinity of the finds until they can be inspected and assessed by BPA in consultation with the appropriate consulting parties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Anticipated impacts to geology or soils would be minimal, as the proposed work would occur within previously disturbed switchyards. Appropriate Best Management Practices (BMP) would be implemented prior to initiating.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status plant species or habitats occur within the project area. There are no anticipated impacts to plants as the proposed work would occur within the boundaries of the previously disturbed switchyards managed to be vegetation free.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No Federal/state special-status wildlife species or habitats occur in the project area.

The project would have temporary noise and disturbance impacts to local wildlife species related to construction equipment noise and human presence. Impacts would be temporary and suitable habitat occurs adjacent to the project area accessible to wildlife during construction.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No water bodies occur within the project area; therefore, the project would have no impact to water bodies, floodplains, or fish.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Wetlands do not occur within the project area; therefore, the project would have no impact to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No impacts to groundwater or aquifers are anticipated as the proposed project ground disturbance would not be deep enough to penetrate groundwater.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change in land use or specially-designated areas resulting from the project. Activities would occur within the boundaries of the previously disturbed switchyards.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would result in minimal impacts to visual quality. New interior chain-link fencing and the addition of yard rock would occur within existing switchyard boundaries and would be consistent with the exiting switchyard.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small amount of vehicle emissions would occur during project implementation. However, there would be no substantial changes to air quality during or after the implementation of the proposed project.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours from the proposed project. No long-term operational noise increase is expected as a result of this project.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During project implementation, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Therefore, implementation of the proposed action would not impact human health or 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: BPA has coordinated and would continue coordination with BOR during construction.

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

Signed:

Laura Roberts
Environmental Protection Specialist