

# memorandum

DATE: August 26, 2013

REPLY TO  
ATTN OF: KEC-4

SUBJECT: Environmental Clearance Memorandum

TO: Dave Tripp  
Project Manager – TEP-CSB-1

**Proposed Action:** Alberton Communication Site Construction

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B1.19 Microwave, meteorological and radio towers, B1.24 Property transfers

**Location:** Township 15 North, Range 22 West, Section 30, Missoula County, Montana

**Proposed by:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)

**Description of the Proposed Action:**

BPA proposes to construct a new communication site to increase the bandwidth on BPA's communication system in Montana that is congested and frequently affected by extreme weather conditions. By adding a new radio station halfway between two existing radio sites that are 60 miles apart, BPA would alleviate these problems and improve reliability.

The proposed site is located along a ridge on undeveloped, conifer-dominated forest, accessible by an existing Forest Service road. The site is currently privately-owned land that would be acquired by BPA. The facilities would be located as far back from the ridgeline as possible, reducing the visibility of the site from the valley below, while still maintaining line of sight to adjacent radio towers.

An area roughly 100 feet by 130 feet would be cleared, cut and filled to create sufficient level ground to accommodate the communication equipment. Any excess material that would remain after grading would be disposed of off-site. The radio facilities would include a new control building with a concrete foundation (18 feet x 36 feet); a 140-foot, self-supporting, lattice-steel tower on a 30-foot x 30-foot concrete pad; and two 1,000-gallon propane tanks. Site preparation would require removal of 5 trees. Limited vegetation clearing of trees taller than 50 feet within two radio beam paths 30 feet wide to a distance of 70 feet from the radio tower feet may also be necessary.

The access road would be bladed and graveled in order to support construction vehicle use. Electrical conduit would be installed beneath the road over a distance of four miles from the nearest power source to provide power to the site. A transformer would be installed on a concrete pad next to the control building and connected via a conduit trenched at a depth of

3 feet. Additional project activities would include possible blasting and/or the use of a hydraulic hammer and rock cutting tools due to the rocky ground. Construction would be staged over the summers of 2013 and 2014.

**Findings:**

On August 26, 2013, the Forest Service signed a decision memo categorically excluding the proposed action, approving the installation of electrical conduit within the Forest Service road right-of-way.

Pursuant to its responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, on September 7, 2012, BPA initiated consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and potentially interested tribes (Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, Nez Perce Tribe and Coeur d'Alene Tribe). On February 13, 2013, the Montana SHPO concurred that the proposed action will have no direct or visual effect on historic properties. They recommended that two identified isolates be flagged prior to project implementation. No response was received from any of the consulted tribes. The Forest Service-Lolo National Forest was also consulted with and expressed no concerns with the project (February 5, 2013).

BPA has determined that the proposed action complies with Section 1021.410 and Appendix B of Subpart D 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, July 9, 1996; 61 FR 64608, Dec. 6, 1996, 76 FR 63764, Nov. 14, 2011). The proposed action does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal. The proposal is not connected [40 C.F.R. 1508.25(a)(1)] to other actions with potentially significant impacts, has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion, is not related to other proposed actions with cumulatively significant impacts [40 C.F.R. 1508.25(a)(2)], and is not precluded by 40 C.F.R. 1506.1 or 10 C.F.R. 1021.211. Moreover, the proposed action would not (i) threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, (ii) require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities, (iii) disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act-excluded petroleum and natural gas products that pre-exist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases, (iv) have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources, or (v) 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.

This proposed action meets the requirements for the Categorical Exclusions referenced above. We therefore determine that the proposed action may be categorically excluded from further NEPA review and documentation.

*/s/ Carolyn A. Sharp*  
Carolyn A. Sharp  
Environmental Project Manager

Concur:

*/s/ Katherine S. Pierce*  
Katherine S. Pierce  
NEPA Compliance Officer

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Attachments:  
Provisions  
Environmental Checklist for Categorical Exclusions

## **Provisions**

This categorical exclusion will meet the following provisions:

### **Cultural Resources**

- Coordinate with the BPA environmental protection specialist and BPA archaeologist to identify the field location of two known artifacts located off the side of the access road. Flag these sites prior to construction to prevent disturbance.
- Should archaeological materials be unexpectedly encountered during construction of the project, stop work and notify the COTR. A qualified archaeologist should immediately be notified and an evaluation made and a treatment plan developed should the find be significant.

## Environmental Checklist for Categorical Exclusions

Name of Proposed Project: Alberton Radio Station Construction

Work Order #: 316897

**This project does not have the potential to cause significant impacts on the following environmentally sensitive resources. See 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B for complete descriptions of the resources. This checklist is to be used as a summary – further discussion may be included in the Categorical Exclusion Memorandum.**

Environmental Resources	No Potential for Significance	No Potential, with Conditions (describe)
1. Historic Properties and Cultural Resources MT SHPO no effect concurrence 2/13/13; FS concurrence 2/5/13 Recommendation to flag two isolates prior to project activities	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. T & E Species, or their habitat(s) None present in project area and/or no suitable habitat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Floodplains or wetlands None present	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Areas of special designation None present	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Health & safety	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Prime or unique farmlands None present	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Special sources of water None present	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Other (describe)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

List supporting documentation attached (if needed):

No Effect Determination for Threatened and Endangered Species

Signed: /s/ Carolyn Sharp

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