

memorandum

DATE: January 22, 2014

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: KEP-4

SUBJECT: Environmental Clearance Memorandum

TO: James Graeper
Civil Engineer – TELP-TPP-3

Proposed Action: Ellensburg-Moxee No. 1 right-of-way (ROW) Geotechnical Exploration between Structures 17/1-22/2

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.7 Fiber Optic Cable

Location: Yakima County, WA

Proposed by: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to conduct subsurface geotechnical exploration to characterize the ROW, for the direct burial of the existing overhead fiber optic cable. This section of fiber optic cable has been susceptible to acts of vandalism and is needed to protect and maintain BPA's operational communication abilities. Geotechnical exploration would include using a backhoe to excavate 37 test pits each being approximately 10 feet long by 3 feet wide and 5 feet deep. The pits would be excavated 40 feet left of the existing structures centerline. Landownership in the area includes private, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, and Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife. The area is dominated by shrub-steppe vegetation.

Findings: 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 Exclusion referenced above. We therefore determine that the proposed action may be categorically excluded from further NEPA review and documentation.

/s/ Kevin George

Kevin George
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur: /s/ Katherine S. Pierce

Katherine S. Pierce
NEPA Compliance Officer

DATE: January 22, 2014

Attachments:

Environmental Checklist for Categorical Exclusions

Environmental Checklist for Categorical Exclusions

Name of Proposed Project: Ellensburg-Moxee Geotechnical Fiber Replacement

Work Order #: 296774

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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No historic properties affected. SHPO concurrence with cultural survey results, received 11/13/13. • No additional comments received from Yakama Tribes regarding cultural survey results w/in consultation period. • Inadvertent discovery documents to be included in construction package and reviewed prior to beginning work. 		
2. T & E Species, or their habitat(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Federal ESA species or habitat are present in the project area. • State T&E species identified in the project area include Townsend ground squirrel “colonies” adjacent to the existing power line near Roza Rd. (Sections 14, #3738 and 2506,) and a prairie falcon nest close to Cottonwood Creek in Sec 23 (#59813). Working w/Cindi Confer Morris (WA DFW 509-952-4834) the squirrel “colonies” in that area are low density and fairly dispersed. Digging should not negatively impact the “colonies”. However, delaying work until May/June would allow squirrel young to become mobile and allow escape to adjacent borrows if squirrels are active in the area. The prairie falcon nest was identified in 2003 but is not believed to be active. Cindi will review the nest site in the spring and confirm whether or not falcons are present. Falcons would be disturbed should work take place above them and within their view from the nest. If this is the case, for work sites w/in a ½ mile radius of the active nest site, work should be delayed until mid-July. 		
3. Floodplains or wetlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No floodplains or wetlands would be impacted by work activities. 		
4. Areas of special designation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noxious weed spread in the Wenas Wildlife Area is to be mitigated by thoroughly cleaning construction equipment entering the project area. • WDFW would like enter into an agreement w/BPA to take on the weed control responsibilities for impacts in this area (typically a ~5 yr. commitment), in exchange for enough herbicide to cover control needs and staff time. The BPA Regional NRS shall contact the WDFW and discuss this activity prior to work beginning in the area. • For disturbed areas WDFW will identify a locally-adapted native seed mix to be used for restoring sites on managed lands. 		
5. Health & safety	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No health and safety issues are present. 		
6. Prime or unique farmlands	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No prime or unique farmlands are present in the project area.		
7. Special sources of water	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No special sources of water present in the project area. 		

8. Other (describe)

- WA DFW has indicated that the project area between 17/1 and 20/2 would be in the middle of the (natural grazing) mass congregation of wintering elk. Approx. 800-1000 elk winter on the far slope between Cottonwood and Buffalo whose activities could be negatively impacted by geotechnical activities, and should be delayed until after April 1 to allow for the animals to move to their normal spring feeding areas outside of the proposed work area.

List supporting documentation attached (if needed):

SHPO Concurrence

Signed: /s/ Kevin George

Date: January 16, 2014

Kevin George, KEP-4