

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Decatur Island Tap Project

**Project Manager:** Mark Korsness TEP-TPP-1

**Location:** San Juan County, Washington

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B4.11 Electric Power Substations and Interconnection Facilities

**Description of the Proposed Action:** BPA proposes to build a transmission line tap structure along BPA's Fidalgo-Lopez Island 69-kV transmission line to integrate Orcas Power and Light Cooperative (OPALCO) with BPA's electrical system. Transmission structure 6/10 would be converted to a fiber optic wood pole. A new wood single-pole transmission structure (new 6/10) would be installed about 30 feet to the east of the fiber optic wood pole. Counterpoise would be installed at the new 6/10 within the transmission line right-of-way about 40 feet out each way from the pole. BPA also would replace structure 6/11 in its existing location about 205 feet west of the fiber optic wood pole. Both structures would have two guy wires with anchors installed adjacent to the poles (structure 6/11's existing guy wires and anchors would be replaced in the same location).

Work on portions of BPA's fiber optic cable system located at transmission structures 5/9 (about 1,390 feet from the east shore of Decatur) and 7/5 and 7/6 (about 960 feet from the west shore of Decatur) would occur. No ground disturbance is proposed at 5/9. One guy wire and anchor would be installed at both 7/5 and 7/6 (within 40 feet of 7/5 and 15 feet of 7/6). About 73 feet of trenching for fiber optic cable conduit would occur adjacent to existing conduit from 7/6 to an existing vault and from the vault to an existing radio shack. The existing conduit, vault and radio shack are located on BPA right-of-way between structures 7/5 and 7/6. Decatur Head Drive, adjacent to structures 5/9, 6/10, and 6/11, and Main Road, adjacent to structures 7/5 and 7/6, would be used for construction access.

Electrical relays within the control houses at BPA's Fidalgo and Lopez Island substations would be upgraded as well.

Disturbance resulting from pole construction and replacement, guy wire anchor installation, counterpoise installation, and fiber optic cable conduit would be about 0.16 acre. No road work is required and no trees would be removed as part of this project.

**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, July 9, 1996; 61 FR 64608, Dec. 6, 1996, 76 FR 63764, Nov. 14, 2011), 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.

/s/ Tish Eaton  
Tish Eaton  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy Mason  
Stacy L. Mason  
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: August 24, 2017

Attachment: Environmental Checklist

## 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.

**Proposed Action:** Decatur Island Tap Project

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### Project Site Description

Topography on Decatur Island consists of rolling hills with slopes that stretch from about 500 feet above sea level (asl) to sea level on the shores. Structures 6/10 and 6/11 are located in a relatively flat area near the center of Decatur Island at about 160 feet asl. Structures 5/9, 7/5 and 7/6 are located on east and west slopes of the island nearer to Decatur's shores. On the transmission line right-of-way, which stretches from the east shore of Decatur to the west shore, vegetation consists of grasses with some shrubs bordered by deciduous and coniferous forest. Very low-density rural residential land use borders the right-of-way for most of its length across Decatur Island. OPALCO has a substation adjacent to structure 6/10 on land cleared of all tall growing vegetation.

### Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. <b>Historic and Cultural Resources</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No potential to effect determination made by BPA contract archaeologist Melissa Teoh on August 7, 2017. DAHP concurred with this determination on August 7, 2017.		
2. <b>Geology and Soils</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Soil disturbance would occur during construction activities including temporary disturbance adjacent to the new structure 6/10, replaced structure 6/11, structures 7/5 and 7/6, and for the fiber optic cable conduit.		
3. <b>Plants</b> (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Minimal disturbance to existing vegetation would occur. No special-status species are present or known to occur at the project sites.		
4. <b>Wildlife</b> (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Work would occur in previously disturbed areas. Wildlife such as deer that use the right-of-way may be temporarily displaced during construction. No special-status species are present or known to occur at the project sites.		
5. <b>Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish</b> (including federal/state special-status species and ESUs)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No water bodies or floodplains are present at the project sites.		

6. **Wetlands** ☒ ☐

Explanation: No wetlands are present at the project sites.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers** ☒ ☐

Explanation: No potential to effect.

8. **Land Use and Specially Designated Areas** ☒ ☐

Explanation: There would be no change in land use and no specially designated areas are present.

9. **Visual Quality** ☒ ☐

Explanation: The new 6/10 structure would look the same as other structures along the Fidalgo-Lopez line and be within an area previously disturbed by OPALCO's substation, other transmission structures, and vaults. Adding this new wood pole would not change the overall setting of this area. Additionally, the replaced structured 6/11 would look identical to the existing structure. Guy wires at structures 7/5 and 7/6 would likely not be easily seen by travelers along Main Road (which crosses perpendicular to the right-of-way between 7/5 and 7/6). The cleared right-of-way is narrow (about 60 feet) and the guy wires would be in line with and behind the structures as viewed from the road.

10. **Air Quality** ☒ ☐

Explanation: Short term dust and vehicle emissions would occur during construction.

11. **Noise** ☒ ☐

Explanation: Temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours. No long-term impacts are anticipated.

12. **Human Health and Safety** ☒ ☐

Explanation: No impact.

### **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, if necessary:

- ☒ Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- ☒ 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, if necessary:

- ☒ 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, if necessary:

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**Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination**

Description: Because the project would include use of both east and west shoreline access points and work will be visible along a main road on the island, a letter will be sent to all landowners on Decatur Island (about 50 residents live on the island) to notify them of BPA's proposed work.

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

Signed: /s/ Tish Eaton  
Tish Eaton ECT-4

Date: August 24, 2017