Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: T-Mobile Wireless Site Upgrades at Union Hill and Raging River

Project Manager: Chuck Wedick – TELP-TTP-3

Location: King County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way; B1.19 Microwave, meteorological and radio towers

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration proposes to allow T-Mobile to make upgrades to antennas and associated equipment at two wireless sites. Work would occur on transmission line structures and in equipment yards which house existing wireless communication equipment. Project actions would include removing, replacing, or installing new antennas, remote radio units, coaxial cable, diplexers, cabinets, and other associated equipment. The Raging River site would include the addition of a new H-frame structure within the existing and previously-disturbed equipment yard. The Union Hill site would include moving the equipment yard fence out three feet and extending the concrete pad from 10 feet by 15 feet to 10 feet by 18 feet.

Union Hill: Project actions would occur on and below structure 20/1 of the Monroe-Novelty Hill No. 1 line.

Raging River: Project actions would occur on and below structure 1/4 of the Echo Lake-Maple Valley Nos. 1 and 2 line.

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, Jul. 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/ Kali Levy
Kali Levy
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Portland State University

Reviewed by:

/s/ Carol Leiter
Carol Leiter
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange *October 26, 2021*
Katey C. Grange Date
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): 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: T-Mobile Wireless Site Upgrades at Union Hill and Raging River

Project Site Description

Project actions would take place in King County, Washington on BPA-fee owned and easement rights-of-way.

Union Hill: Project actions would occur on and below structure 20/1 of the Monroe-Novelty Hill No. 1 line (Township 26 North, Range 6 East, and Section 35). This site is located in a rural area near an animal stable. The fence and concrete pad extension area is currently grass, weeds, and some low shrubs. An unimproved access road run approximately 35 feet south of the structure.

Raging River: Project actions would occur on and below structure 1/4 of the Echo Lake-Maple Valley Nos. 1 and 2 line (Township 23 North, Range 7 East, and Section 11). This site is located in a forested area approximately 700 feet east of Highway 18. An unimproved access road provides access to the structure.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA historian and archaeologist review of the proposed project actions found no potential to cause effects to historic or archaeological resources.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground disturbance would be limited to the installation of a new H-frame and the three foot expansion of a fence and concrete pad.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No special-status plants are known to be in the project areas. Additionally, the towers are within 35 feet of unimproved roadways, the use of which would minimize impacts to vegetation. Some vegetation would be crushed in accessing the structures and from the concrete pad extension.

Notes:

- To prevent the spread of noxious weeds, the construction vehicles would be required to be cleaned before entering a new project location if traveling off road.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Project locations are not located within or adjacent to any critical habitat areas. However, the Raging River site is adjacent to a Washington Spotted Owl Management Circle. Project actions would not impact any potential habitat but would temporarily increase noise in the area. Spotted owls are most sensitive to noise during their nesting period from March 1st to September 30th. Project work outside of this time would have no effect on spotted owls or any other ESA-listed or sensitive species.

Any local wildlife in the area may be temporarily be disturbed by project noise.

Notes:

- To avoid any potential effects on spotted owls that may be present near the Raging River site, work would occur between October 1st and February 28th, which is outside of the nesting period.

- If any active nests are found on the structures prior to construction, the construction would be delayed until the nests are unoccupied.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project sites are not located in or near water bodies.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project sites are not located in wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground disturbance would be minimal. There would be no impact to groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change of land use. The project sites house existing communications equipment.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be minimal changes to the appearance of the project sites.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions would occur during construction; however, there would be no significant changes to air quality during or after construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise would not change.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All applicable safety standards would be followed during project work. The project would not create conditions that would increase risk to human health and 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: The project would occur in BPA fee owned and easement rights-of-way. T-Mobile would be responsible for notifying the landowners and coordinating access.

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

Signed: */s/ Kali Levy* *October 26, 2021*

Kali Levy, ECT – 4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Portland State University