

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: T-Mobile Auburn Black Diamond Telecommunications Equipment Upgrade

Project No.: W1036

Project Manager: Brian Keith (CONT), TELP-TPP-3

Location: King County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.19 Microwave, Meteorological, and Radio Towers; B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow T-Mobile to upgrade its telecommunications equipment located at structure 2/5 of BPA's Covington-White River Nos. 1 and 2 Transmission Line in King County, Washington. Telecommunications equipment would be installed on an existing transmission structure and within the associated fenced equipment compound located at the base of the structure.

On the existing transmission structure, the proposed upgrade would:

- Remove one antenna mount
- Reinstall three existing antennas
- Reinstall six radio remote units (RRU's)
- Install three antennas and mounts with crossover plates
- Install 180 feet of hybrid cable and one 6x24 hybrid trunk

Within the existing ground-level equipment compound, T-Mobile would:

- Install new wireless equipment within an existing cabinet
- Install new service lighting

There would be no ground disturbance associated with this project.

BPA leases space on its transmission towers for wireless antenna facilities pursuant to its authority under sections 2(e) and 2(f) of the Bonneville Project Act. 16 U.S.C. § 832a(e)-(f).

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.¹

Jeremy Doschka
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

¹ BPA is aware of the November 12, 2024, decision in *Marin Audubon Society v. Federal Aviation Administration*, No. 23-1067 (D.C. Cir. Nov. 12, 2024). To the extent that a court may conclude that the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA are not judicially enforceable or binding on this agency action, BPA has nonetheless elected to follow those regulations at 40 Code Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) §§ 1500– 1508, in addition to the US Department of Energy's NEPA implementing procedures at 10 C.F.R. Part § 1021, to meet the agency's obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 *et seq.*

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.

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Project Site Description

The project site is located at structure 2/5 on the Covington-White River Nos. 1 and 2 transmission line right-of-way (ROW) in King County, Washington (Township 21 North, Range 5 East, Section 11). The transmission line ROW is in easement on private land. The project site is located near a low-density residential area with patchy wooded areas and an area of disturbed soils south of the structure with multiple pieces of machinery and vehicles parked in the ROW. Vegetation consists of low growing grasses, forbs, and weeds. No wetlands or waters are located within or near the project site.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA Cultural Resources staff has determined that the proposed project meets Stipulation I.A.1 of *Programmatic Agreement Among the Bonneville Power Administration, the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, the Washington State Historic Preservation Office, the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to Address Effects to BPA Transmission Lines* (December 19, 2024). No further Section 106 consultation is required.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing work would take place as part of the proposed activities. Some minor soil compaction may occur from vehicles and equipment at the sites. There would be no substantial impacts to geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance would occur from the proposed action. Grasses, forbs, and weeds would likely be crushed from vehicles or equipment during installation activities on and below the structure. There would be no substantial impacts to plants and no effect to ESA-listed or sensitive plant species would occur.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor and temporary wildlife disturbance could occur from elevated noise and human presence during implementation of the proposed action. However, wildlife species that could be present in the area would likely be habituated to this level of disturbance given the surrounding area consists of residential areas and nearby railroad tracks. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status wildlife species near the project site, and no suitable special-status species habitat is present.

Notes:

- If any active nests are found on the structure, the project would be delayed until the environmental lead confirms that the nest is unoccupied.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No water bodies, floodplains, or fish habitat is located within or near the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies or floodplains and would have no effect on special status fish species or habitat.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present within or near the project site. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would take place on the existing structure and within the existing equipment compound below the structure. No sediment or hazardous material releases are expected from the proposed actions. No impacts to groundwater or aquifers are expected.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would take place at an existing transmission structure with existing wireless network equipment already in place. No changes in land use are proposed and the project site is not located within a specially-designated areas, therefore no impacts to land use or specially-designated areas are expected.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During construction, the installation of equipment and general construction activities would cause temporary visual impacts. However, the long-term visual impacts would be consistent with the existing uses of the site as the new equipment being installed is similar to existing telecommunications equipment on the structure.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would produce minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions in the local area. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the proposed action.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would produce some minor construction-related noise but would be temporary and during daylight hours (approximately 7 AM to 7 PM). There would be no long-term change in ambient noise following completion of the proposed action.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action would not generate or use hazardous materials. Decommissioned equipment would be removed from the site. The proposed action would not be expected to impact 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: Underlying landowners would be notified of any work or access requirements as needed.

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

Signed:

Jeremy Doschka
Environmental Protection Specialist