

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: T-Mobile Wireless Upgrades at Potholes Site

Project No.: W1061

Project Manager: Brian Kieth, TELP-TPP-3

Location: Grant County, Oregon

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 their antennas on the POTH radio tower and equipment at the Potholes Substation in Sammamish, Grant County, Oregon. The structure is located on BPA fee-owned property. Telecommunications equipment would be removed and installed on the tower and adjacent equipment compound.

On the existing tower, work would include:

- Removing 6 antennas, 7 remote radio units, and removing 3 sector frames.
- Install 7 antennas, 8 remote radio units, 2 sector frames, and 2 hybrid cables.
- Remove all coaxial cable.

Within the existing equipment compound, work would include:

- Remove 3 cabinets, and the existing ice canopy.
- Install 2 cabinets, an ice canopy, and other associated telecommunications equipment.
- Upgrading to a 200A power service, and the intra-cabinet baseband cards.

Access to the site is provided by a paved road and a gravel parking lot. No additional actions would occur on BPA fee-owned lands.

BPA leases space on its structures 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; 89 FR 34074, April 30, 2024), 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

Kane Barrett Finders
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment(s): Environmental Checklist

¹ BPA is aware that the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), on February 25, 2025, issued an interim final rule to remove its NEPA implementing regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500–1508. Based on CEQ guidance, and to promote completion of its NEPA review in a timely manner and without delay, in this CX BPA is voluntarily relying on the CEQ regulations, in addition to DOE's own regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021, to meet its 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.

Proposed Action: T-Mobile Wireless Upgrades at Potholes Site

Project Site Description

Potholes site is BPA fee-owned property in Moses Lake, Grant County, Washington. (Section 8, Township 10, Range 19) The ground cover of the site consists of bare earth, gravel, sage brush, and sand. Outside of the project site is low density residential, agriculture, and sagebrush plains. The project site is characterized by Quincy fine sand, which is not hydric.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed project actions meet the requirements for the *Program Comment for Communications Projects on Federal Lands and Property* (March 13, 2024). Pursuant to Stipulation VI.B. "Collocation of communications antennae," no further Section 106 review and consultation is required.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minor soil compaction may occur due to increased vehicle traffic during the proposed construction; however, this would be minimal and would not result in significant effects to soil or geology. No soil disturbance would be associated with this project.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance is anticipated. Access to the site is provided by a paved road and a gravel parking lot that would not result in vegetation disturbance. There are no documented occurrences of any special-status plant species, or plant species protected under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) occurring at the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact protected plant species.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no special-status wildlife species or suitable habitat for special-status wildlife species present in the project area. Minor noise and visual disturbance could occur during equipment installation, but these disturbances would be temporary, transitory, and likely similar to background levels of noise and visual disturbance. Therefore, the proposed action would not have an effect on special-status wildlife species or habitats. If an active

nest is found on the structure prior to equipment installation, the work would be delayed until the nest is unoccupied.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would take place on the existing tower and within the existing fenced equipment compound. No in-water work would take place, and no sediment or hazardous material releases are expected from the proposed action. No impacts to water bodies, floodplains, or fish are expected.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would take place on the existing tower and within the existing fenced equipment compound. No wetlands are located within the proposed action area. No sediment or hazardous material releases are expected from the proposed action. No impacts to wetlands are expected.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would take place on the existing tower and within the existing fenced equipment compound. No sediment or hazardous material releases are expected from the proposed action. 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 on the existing tower and within the existing fenced equipment compound. No changes in land use are proposed. No impacts to land use or specially-designated areas are expected.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would take place on the existing tower and within the existing fenced equipment compound. Some minor changes in the visual appearance of the antennas, wiring, and equipment layout may occur, but these would be consistent with the existing use of the site and would generally not be overtly noticeable from nearby viewing areas. No substantial impacts to visual quality are expected

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Small amounts of fugitive dust and vehicle emissions may occur during site work; however, these would be temporary and minor. No substantial impacts to air quality are expected.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some minor noise associated with construction equipment and vehicles may occur but would be temporary and during daylight hours. No substantial impacts from noise are expected.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No release of hazardous materials is expected. Verizon would be required to use equipment that meets FCC standards for radio wave emissions. Any hazardous materials, such as lead-acid batteries, removed from the site would be disposed of at a designated hazardous waste facility. No impacts to human health and safety are expected.

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: Work would occur on BPA fee-owned land.

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

Signed:

Kane Barrett Finders
Environmental Protection Specialist