

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Mobile Redi-Foster Creek and Waterville Radio Station Upgrades

Project Manager: Ben Younce—TEPF-CSB-2

Location: Douglas County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.19 Microwave, meteorological, and radio towers

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to upgrade its VHF radio system at two sites in its Grand Coulee Radio Region. The upgrades would include the addition of equipment and replacement of antennas at BPA's existing Foster Creek, and Waterville Radio Station sites. The project would help replace BPA's aging VHF radio system with a simple, modern radio system with improved voice coverage for remote field personnel.

At the existing **Foster Creek Radio Station**, BPA would install new equipment, including a VHF repeater and terminal server, within the existing equipment building at the site. A grounding wire would also be installed near the building. One new 20-foot-long whip antenna would be installed at the top of the 120-foot-tall tower, along with new coaxial cable. Port holes would be drilled through the exterior of the building, to connect the coaxial cable to the indoor equipment.

At the existing **Waterville Radio Station**, BPA would install new equipment, including an equipment rack, in the existing equipment building at the site. A new 20-foot-long whip antenna and coaxial cable would be installed on top of the 100-foot-tall lattice tower. A grounding wire would also be installed. Up to five potholes would be excavated to a depth of 18 inches adjacent to the equipment building. A safety cable system would be installed on the tower ladder to protect tower maintenance workers from falling. This system would include installation of an anchor support beam near the top of the structure, along with a series of brackets, approximately 10 feet apart, with a top and bottom anchor.

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/ Beth Balanger

Beth Belanger
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Carol Leiter

Carol Leiter
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange 6/30/2020

Katey C. Grange Date
NEPA Compliance Officer

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.

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Project Site Description

The sites are both in Douglas County, Washington, at existing radio station facilities. The project areas are graveled and surrounded by chain-link fencing.

Foster Creek Radio Station is in Section 31, Township 29 North, Range 26 East and is located 1.25 miles south of the Columbia River and approximately three miles southeast of the town of Bridgeport. The topography at the radio station is a flat plateau, with steep slopes to the north and west. The surrounding area consists of mostly agricultural fields to the south and east, and a transmission line corridor to the north.

Waterville Radio Station is in Section 12, Township 24 North, Range 21 East and is located four miles east of the Columbia River and five miles southwest of the town of Waterville. There are several radio towers at this location. The topography at the radio station is a flat plateau, with steep slopes to the north and west. The surrounding area consists of sparsely populated rural residential housing.

There are no waterways or wetlands in, or near, any of the sites.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Both radio stations are eligible for listing on the National Historic Register, but the proposed project activities have been determined to have no potential to effect the integrity of these resources. Additionally, all of the ground disturbing activities would occur within the fenced areas around the radio stations, which have been substantially disturbed and thus the action would not affect archaeological resources. BPA has determined that these undertakings have No Potential to Effect Historic Properties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The ground disturbance at the site would be minimal and would cause no impacts to geology or soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project areas are devoid of vegetation; therefore, there would be no impacts to vegetation, including special-status plants.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The project areas are within fenced areas and do not contain high quality habitat at the project sites. Temporary elevated noise would occur from project activities that may disturb adjacent wildlife. The area surrounding the Foster Creek Radio Station has nesting habitat for golden eagles and other raptors. There would be no effects to endangered species or other special-status species.

Notes: Noise producing activities at Foster Creek would be restricted to occur between September 1 and December 31, to avoid impacts during the critical nesting period.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no water bodies, floodplains, or fish at, or near, the project locations; therefore, there would be no impacts to these resources.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands at, or near, the project locations; therefore, there would be no impacts to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed ground disturbance at the project areas are to a maximum depth of 18 inches and would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The land use would not change at any of the locations. There are no specially-designated areas near the project areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The visual quality would be consistent with the existing use of the radio towers; therefore, there would be no substantial change to the visual quality at the project locations.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

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

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: During project activities all standard safety protocols would be followed. Project activities would not impact human health or 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. 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. 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. 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. N/A

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: BPA owns these facilities and would not need to coordinate with underlying landowners for these projects. The UHF upgrade projects are similar to other

maintenance activities that occur at these facilities, and would not warrant notification to adjacent landowners.

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

Signed: /s/ Beth Belanger 06/30/2020
Beth Belanger, ECT-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC