

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: T-Mobile Upgrades at Maloney Ridge Radio Station

Project Manager: Adelle Harris—TSES-TPP-2

Location: King 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) is proposing to allow T-Mobile to upgrade their antennas at the Maloney Ridge Radio Station. The upgrades would consist of removal of three Nokia FXFC radios and replace those with three new AHFIG radios. The removal and replacements would occur at the 92-foot level on the 120-foot lattice tower. There would be no additional tower modifications or ground disturbance associated with the work.

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 Belanger

Beth Belanger
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Carol Leiter

Carol Leiter

Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange August 16, 2021

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.

Proposed Action: T-Mobile Upgrades at Maloney Ridge Radio Station

Project Site Description

The project area is on Maloney Ridge in the Snoqualmie National Forest in King County, Washington, approximately one mile southeast of the town of Skykomish. The site is developed with two radio towers and several equipment buildings. The surrounding area is forested. The tower is in Section 36, Township 26 North, Range 11 East.

The nearest waterbody is Maloney Creek, located 0.5 miles west of the project location. There are no wetlands in the vicinity of the site. The site is in a graveled and fenced lease area. The surrounding forest is dominated by Western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*), with noble firs (*Abies procera*) and Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) interspersed.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA cultural staff have reviewed the proposed project and determined that there is no potential to cause effects to historical or cultural resources because there would be no ground disturbance associated with the project and the radio tower is not considered a historic resource.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would not involve any ground disturbance; therefore, there would be no impact to geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project location is in a graveled, fenced area; therefore, there would be no impacts to plants.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: The project would occur in an area designated as critical habitat for marbled murrelets and Northern spotted owls. Additionally, there are occurrence records within 3.5 miles for marbled murrelet and 1.75 miles for Northern spotted owl. In 2019, BPA completed informal

consultation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for similar project activities that may affect but are not likely to adversely effect either species. The USFWS concurred with BPA's determination, as long as the timing restrictions in the notes below are followed. On August 5, 2021, BPA contacted USFWS to determine if any additional consultation would be required for the current proposed action. USFWS responded on the same day and stated that consultation would not need to be re-initiated for this project.

There are no other federal or state special-status wildlife species or habitats present that would be impacted by the project.

Due to the limited scope of the project and timing of construction activities, the project is unlikely to affect any non-listed wildlife species.

Notes:

- Work would occur between September 5 and February 28
- For work occurring between September 5 to September 23, work would start two hours after official sunrise and end two hours prior to official sunset

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would not involve any ground disturbance. Additionally, there are no water bodies, floodplains, or fish present at, or near, the project location; therefore, there would be no impacts.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would not involve ground disturbance. Additionally, there are no wetlands present at, or near, the project location; therefore, there would be no impacts to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project would not involve ground disturbance; therefore, there would be no impacts to groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not change the land use at the location and there are no specially-designated areas in the vicinity; therefore, there would be no impacts to these resources.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The visual quality would not change at the site.

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 significantly.

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.

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 underlying land is owned by US Forest Service (USFS); however, USFS has designated the Maloney Ridge Users Association (MRUA), a consortium of tower stakeholders, to review and coordinate minor activities, such as operations/maintenance and antenna upgrades at the site. The MRUA has agreed to allow the T-Mobile upgrades to occur.

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 August 16, 2021
Beth Belanger – ECT-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Flux Resources, LLC