

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Maupin Substation Generation Interconnection

Project Number: 4517

Project Manager: Jay Chester—TEPS-TPP-1

Location: Wasco County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.11 Electrical power substations and interconnection facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to interconnect Avangrid's 202-megawatt (MW) solar development project with BPA's electrical system at Maupin Substation. Expansion of the substation yard to the west (about 41 feet by 204 feet) would provide room for construction of a new bay and placement of associated equipment. Within the expansion area and substation, new support structures and foundations would be constructed. Avangrid would construct one transmission line structure about 200 feet north of the substation to connect their generation tie line to a bay in Maupin Substation.

Two fiber optic cable vaults (about 4 feet by 4 feet by 4 feet vaults) would be installed below ground about 100 feet east of the substation. Two 4-inch fiber optic conduits would be installed in trenches running between the vaults and the substation control house (about 375 feet and 425 feet of 42-inch deep by 24-inch wide trenches).

About 500 feet of gravel road would be constructed within the expansion area and existing substation. Staging of materials and equipment would occur inside the substation fence or south of the substation between the substation fence and Bakeoven Road.

Temporary structures to be installed during construction include a shoofly to the north of the substation and a laydown yard to the south of the substation. A construction trailer would be located on the laydown yard for the duration of construction. Both temporary structures would be outside of the substation fenceline, but located on BPA fee-owned land.

Ground disturbance (about 3 acres) would occur during substation expansion; construction of new road; at the vault holes; along the length of the fiber trenches; and where Avangrid installs the new structure.

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/ Emma Reinemann
Emma Reinemann
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel
Sarah T. Biegel Date: July 26, 2021
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: Maupin Substation Generation Interconnection

Project Site Description

Maupin Substation is located on a flat ridge (about 1820 feet in elevation) in hilly terrain about 2.5 miles east of the Deschutes River (a designated Wild and Scenic River) and Maupin, Oregon. Vegetation consists of sparse grasses with a few shrubs. Land use is agricultural (grazing) except for multiple transmission line rights-of-way entering and exiting the substation. One privately-owned parcel surrounds the substation. An unnamed stream (with NWI wetland within the riparian zone) is located about 0.25 miles northeast of the substation; a second stream (Nye Creek) also with NWI wetland is located about 0.4 mile south. Both drainages are about 200 feet in elevation below the ridge where the substation is located.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA initiated Area of Potential Effect (APE) consultation with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), and Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs (CTWS) Reservation of Oregon on May 14, 2020. SHPO concurred with the APE on June 12, 2020; no response was received from the CTUIR; and CTWS concurred with the APE on June 1, 2020, with the recommendation of an Inadvertent Discovery Plan (IDP) and training of construction crews on the contents and importance of the IDP.

BPA determined that there would be no historic properties affected by the proposed activities and consulted on the determination with SHPO on July 1, 2020, and with CTUIR and CTWS on June 23, 2020. SHPO concurred with the determination on July 30, 2020; no response was received from CTUIR; and CTWS concurred with the determination on July 16, 2020, with the recommendation of an Inadvertent Discovery Plan (IDP) and training of construction crews on the contents and importance of the IDP. BPA revisited the documentation from 2020 and finds that it still applies to the updated work activities,

Notes:

- An IDP would be implemented for the proposed project activities. A preconstruction meeting would be held in which construction crews would be trained regarding the content and importance of the IDP.
- In the event any archaeological material is encountered during project activities, stop work in the vicinity and immediately notify the BPA environmental lead, archaeologist, and project manager; interested tribes; SHPO; and the appropriate local, state, and Federal agencies. Implement reasonable measures to protect the discovery site, including any appropriate stabilization or covering. Take reasonable steps to ensure the confidentiality of the discovery site, including restricting access.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Excavated spoils would be placed in a BPA-approved location. All disturbed soil would be stabilized.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed or other special-status plant species or habitat is present. The closest population of an ESA species of concern (Tygh Valley milk-vetch) is about 2.5 miles west of the substation. About one acre of grasses (mostly non-native) would be removed or disturbed. Disturbed areas would be reseeded.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Northern spotted owl and Oregon spotted frog (both listed as threatened with designated critical habitat) may be present in Wasco County although no suitable habitat is present nor are there known occurrences within the project area; there would be no effect on these species. Wildlife present would likely move out of the area during construction.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No waterbodies, floodplains or fish present. Bull trout (listed as threatened with designated critical habitat) may be present in Wasco County; because there would be no in-water work, there would no effect on bull trout.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands present.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project is unlikely to impact groundwater or aquifers. The maximum depth of disturbance for the project would be 15 feet. Spill prevention measures would be utilized during construction activities.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Land use in the project area would not change. Work would not occur within or near the Lower Deschutes Wild and Scenic River area.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Expansion of the substation would add additional man-made elements to the landscape although it would not look markedly different than the existing facility. Because the substation is located on a flat ridge about 800 feet in elevation above Maupin, the substation is not visible from the town. Because the Deschutes River flows through deep canyons in this area, it is also unlikely that the substation is visible from the river near Maupin. If visible from other areas of the river or along area roads, given the distance of those views, it is unlikely that the substation would look different than prior to the expansion.

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: Residences in Maupin are about 2.5 miles away. 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.

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: No landowner notification or coordination would be necessary since the work would take place on BPA land.

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

Signed: /s/ Emma Reinemann Date: July 26, 2021
Emma Reinemann
Environmental Protection Specialist