

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** MREDI – Teanaway and Schultz VHF Radio Upgrades

**Project Manager:** Ben Younce, TEPF-CSB-2

**Location:** Kittitas 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 Ellensburg Radio Regions. The upgrades would include the addition of indoor equipment and replacement of antennas at BPA's existing Teanaway and Schultz 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 **Schultz Radio Station**, BPA would remove a 6-foot-diameter microwave dish from the existing 100-foot-tall lattice tower, located immediately west of the substation control house. Coaxial cable and a waveguide path would also be removed from the tower. A new 6-foot-diameter microwave (MW) antenna would be installed on the lattice tower, at 60 feet above ground. New waveguide supports would be installed on the existing icebridge to support new VHF coaxial cable. New interior and exterior ground bars would be mounted beneath the waveguide entry ports. A hole through the control house wall would be required to connect the interior ground bar to the exterior ground grid. A new tower ground bar would be installed near the ice bridge and three new ground rods would be installed at the base of the lattice tower, on each leg. The existing indoor radio, rack and other equipment would be removed and replaced with new equipment.

At the **Teanaway Radio Station**, BPA would remove two 8-foot-diameter, and one 6-foot-diameter MW antennas from the existing 55-foot-tall lattice tower. Coaxial cable would be removed from the tower and indoor radio equipment would also be removed from the equipment building, located immediately south of the tower. Support brackets would be added to the tower to increase the load capacity of the tower. One new 6-foot-diameter MW antenna would be installed on the tower. New interior and exterior ground bars would be mounted beneath the waveguide entry ports. A penetration through the communications building wall would be required to connect the interior ground bar to the exterior ground ring. Additionally, a new microwave radio and associated equipment would be installed inside the building.

Two trees would be removed from the surrounding area east of Teanaway Radio Station to meet beampath clearance requirements.

Fall protection systems would be installed on both towers to increase safety for tower maintenance workers. This system would include installation of an anchor support beam near the

top of the structure, along with a series of brackets, approximately ten 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 Belanger

Beth Belanger  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Flux Resources, LLC

Reviewed by:

/s/ Carol Leiter

Carol Leiter  
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

<u>/s/ Katey C. Grange</u>	<u>June 18, 2021</u>
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:** MREDI – Teanaway and Schultz VHF Radio Upgrades

## **Project Site Description**

The sites are in Kittitas County in Washington, at two existing radio station facilities.

The Teanaway Radio Station is approximately 15 miles northwest of Ellensburg, Washington and about 1.8 miles south of Interstate 90. The surrounding area to the south, east, and west is largely undeveloped forest land, with rural residential housing located to the north. An unnamed stream is located 375 feet south of the project location. The elevation at the site is 3,430 feet. It is in Section 17, Township 19 North, Range 16 East.

The Schultz Radio Station is located at BPA's Schultz Substation, approximately 10 miles northeast of Ellensburg and 10 miles east of U.S. Route 97. The surrounding area is scrub-shrub habitat, with sparse rural residential housing to the southeast. Numerous intermittent streams just south of the substation, drain to the North Branch Canal, two miles to the south. The elevation at the site is 2,500 feet. It is in Section 19, Township 19 North, Range 19 East.

## **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On September 25, 2018, section 106 consultation was initiated with the Yakama Nation and Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) for the Teanaway Radio Station project. A cultural survey was conducted and the project activities were determined to have no adverse effect to cultural or historic resources. On January 20, 2021, the cultural survey and determination of no adverse effect was sent to the consulting parties. DAHP concurred with BPA's determination on January 21, 2021. To date, the Yakama Nation has not responded.

The work at the Schultz Radio Station was reviewed by the BPA cultural lead and it was determined that the project activities would have no potential to affect cultural resources because the radio tower is not eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Additionally, the minimal ground disturbance that would occur is in an area that has previously disturbed soils from the original construction of the radio tower and associated substation.

### **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The antenna replacements and equipment removal would not require any ground disturbance. Tree removal near the Teanaway site may result in minor ground disturbance;

however, the tree stumps would be left intact onsite. There would be no impacts to geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no Federal/state special-status species or habitats at either site that would be impacted by the work. The two trees slated for removal near Teanaway are native Douglas firs (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), approximately 35- to 45-feet-tall and 11- to 14-inches in diameter. Best management practices would be used to control erosion. The Schultz radio tower is in a graveled location.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: There are no Federal/state special-status species or habitats at either site that would be impacted by the project. The sites are existing radio stations.

Notes:

- Tree removal would occur after August 15, to minimize impacts to nesting migratory birds.

### **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 habitats in, or near, either site that would be affected by project activities.

### **6. Wetlands**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands at either location that would be impacted by the project.

### **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no excavation activities planned for the project; therefore, groundwater and aquifers would not be impacted by the project.

### **8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas**

Potential for Significance: No

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

### **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The visual quality would be similar and would remain consistent with the existing use of the radio station sites.

## 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. The installation of fall protection systems on the towers, would increase worker safety overall.

### **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: Both sites are on BPA fee-owned properties. Neither site has neighbors in close proximity; therefore, landowner notification and coordination would not be required.

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 June 18, 2021  
Beth Belanger – ECT-4 Date  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Flux Resources, LLC