

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Tillamook Substation Disconnect Switches and Maintenance

Project No.: P04163

Project Manager: Matt Joerin, TEPP-TPP-1

Location: Tillamook County, Oregon

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.7 Electronic equipment; B4.11 - Electric power substations and interconnection facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Tillamook Substation is an existing BPA facility in Tillamook County, Oregon. The proposed project would replace electrical equipment experiencing maintenance or operational issues including several 115 kilovolt (kV) and 230kV disconnect switches, relays, and bus inside the existing substation fenced yard. The project would also upgrade associated relay and communication equipment inside the control house and replace the station service emergency generator. All proposed construction activities would occur within the previously disturbed and maintained fenced and graveled substation yard.

The project would require demolition and removal of existing concrete footings, followed by excavation, grading, and construction of new equipment footings. All ground disturbance at Tillamook Substation (i.e., excavating to install new footings, grounding, and conduit) would occur within the existing gravel substation yard. No excavation would extend beyond the previously disturbed substation footprint and excess excavated material would be hauled offsite for disposal. General equipment to be used includes cranes, excavators, bulldozers, dump trucks, vacuum trucks, and maintenance vehicles. All relaying equipment at the substation would be installed on existing racks inside the control house with no interior or exterior building modifications.

No new land rights acquisition is required, and the action would not require any new access roads or road improvements. Any construction staging or material laydown areas would be located in previously-disturbed areas at the existing substation facility.

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/ Aaron Shurtliff

Aaron Shurtliff, EP-AMPN-2
Environmental Engineer

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel
NEPA Compliance Officer Date: February 7, 2024

Attachment(s): 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: Tillamook Substation Maintenance and Disconnect Switch Replacements

Project Site Description

The proposed project would occur on BPA fee-owned land at Tillamook Substation in Tillamook County, Oregon. All proposed ground-disturbing activities would occur within the existing footprint of the fenced substation yard which has been heavily developed. The substation yard consists of compacted, non-native yard rock and is maintained clear of vegetation. Outside of the substation yard, the surrounding area is primarily characterized by rural, industrial, and agricultural land uses and maintained BPA transmission line right-of-way.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Following a cultural records review of the project area, BPA initiated consultation with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians, and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) on August 8, 2022. The substation has been determined not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and no archaeological resources were identified with the potential to be affected by the project. BPA sent a letter to SHPO on November 29, 2023, requesting concurrence that the project would have no adverse effect to historic properties. SHPO concurred with BPA in a letter sent December 14, 2023.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Localized ground disturbance would occur during construction in the rock yard that could extend into some native soils below yard rock. Standard erosion control measures would be implemented to prevent sediment migration off site. Any excess spoils generated during project activities not used as backfill shall be hauled off site to an approved location.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be in the substation yard, which is maintained free of vegetation. No Federal or state-listed plants or designated critical habitat occur within the proximity of the project.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A review of ESA-listed and special-status species that may be present in the vicinity of the project site did not identify any species that may be impacted by the proposed action.

Therefore, the proposed action would not effect ESA-listed threatened, endangered, or proposed species; designated or proposed critical habitat; candidate species; state special-status species of concern; or priority habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The substation yard is not in a floodplain and is approximately 0.5 miles from Dougherty Slough, the nearest waterway with Federal-listed species. The slough is designated critical habitat for the Oregon Coast Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*). Typical erosion control BMPs would be implemented and no riparian habitat, water bodies, floodplains or fish-bearing streams are present or would be affected from the work in the electric yard.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present inside or adjacent to the substation yard.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: According to the US Geological Survey (USGS) National Water Information System (NWIS), no critical aquifer recharge areas nor any well head, source water, or groundwater protection areas occur within or adjacent to the project area. Ground excavation for footings and oil containment upgrades would not reach groundwater depth below the substation yard. Standard construction BMPs and Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures Plan would reduce the potential for inadvertent spills of hazardous materials that could contaminate groundwater or aquifers. No new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers are proposed.

8. Land Use and Specially Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action is consistent with current land uses, and the project site is not located in a specially designated area.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The equipment replacements are similar in size and appearance to existing equipment and the associated footing modifications in the substation yard would not have a noticeable impact on the baseline visual quality at the site.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction activities have the potential to result in a minor and temporary increase in dust and emissions in the local area. Standard erosion and sediment controls would be implemented, as needed. There would be no change to air quality after construction is completed.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project site is in a rural area surrounded by agricultural lands and facilities and other electric transmission lines and equipment. The activities in the substation yard would be consistent with routine operation and maintenance of an electric facility. During construction, use of vehicles and equipment and general construction activities could temporarily and intermittently produce noise at levels higher than current ambient conditions. However, the increase is not expected to exceed ambient background sound levels from existing land uses near the project site (e.g., vehicular traffic, agricultural activities, BPA right-of-way maintenance). There would be no long-term change in ambient noise following completion of the project.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All standard safety protocols would be followed throughout project construction, and standard construction BMPs would minimize risk to human health and 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 notification required. All work on BPA fee-owned property and no visual or other effects to adjacent landowner. If needed, a realty specialist would contact adjacent landowner(s) prior to starting construction activities.

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

Signed: /s/ Aaron Shurtliff
Aaron Shurtliff, EP-AMPN-2
Environmental Engineer

Date: February 7, 2024