

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: T-Mobile Communications Equipment Upgrade at Potholes Substation

Project No.: W0821

Project Manager: Jonathan M. Toobian, TELP-TPP-3

Location: Grant 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 allow T-Mobile to upgrade its wireless communications equipment located on an existing 200-foot-tall steel lattice communications structure at BPA's Potholes Substation near Moses Lake, Grant County, Washington. Work would include removing three existing FHOA remote radio units (RRUs) and replacing them with three new AHLOA RRUs. The existing and new RRUs would be approximately the same size and shape and would be located in approximately the same location near the top of the communications structure. The work would be completed by T-Mobile with a BPA-certified safety watcher onsite.

The project would not require any ground disturbance and would use established access roads and work areas.

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/ William "Walker" Stinnette

William "Walker" Stinnette
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient CRGT

Reviewed by:

/s/ Carol P. Leiter

Carol P. Leiter
Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange February 17, 2021

Katey C. Grange Date
NEPA Compliance Officer

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: T-Mobile Communications Equipment Upgrade at Potholes Substation

Project Site Description

The project site is an existing T-Mobile communications facility located on BPA fee-owned property at Potholes Substation near Moses Lake, Grand County, Washington (Township 19 North, Range 26 East, Section 26). The facility is approximately 2,400 square feet, enclosed by a chain-link fence, and covered in gravel with little to no vegetation. T-Mobile communications equipment is mounted near the top of an approximately 200-foot-tall steel lattice communications structure, and additional equipment is mounted on concrete pads within the fence at the base of the structure. All access roads and work areas are paved or graveled. Potholes Substation is located to the west and Interstate-90 is located to the south of the project site. Surrounding land use is primarily irrigated agriculture with low-density rural residential properties and isolated areas of native sagebrush steppe and shrub land.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not require ground disturbance that could potentially impact archaeological resources, and no major modifications to existing built historic resources are proposed. Therefore, the proposed undertaking would have no potential to cause effects to historic properties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not require any ground disturbance and would use established access roads and work areas. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact geology and soils.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not require any vegetation removal or management, and all access roads and work areas are graveled or paved with little to no vegetation. Therefore, the proposed project would have no effect on protected plant species or habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are documented occurrences of burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) near the project site. The species is considered a Bird of Conservation Concern by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and is a candidate for listing under Washington State wildlife protection laws. Loss of habitat and reduction in prey populations are driving declines in burrowing owl populations. The proposed project would not result in adverse modification to burrowing owl habitat and would not reduce prey availability. Minor and temporary disturbance of normal wildlife behavior could occur from elevated noise and human presence during project implementation. However, wildlife species that could be present in the area are likely habituated to this level of human activity given the proximity of Potholes Substation, Interstate-90, and surrounding land uses. Therefore, the proposed project would have no effect on protected wildlife species or habitats.

Notes:

- If any active bird nest is found on the steel lattice communications structure, the project would be delayed until the nest is unoccupied.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not require any ground disturbance and would use established access roads and work areas. No water bodies, floodplains, or fish are present within or near the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact water bodies and floodplains and would have no effect on protected fish species or habitats.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not require any ground disturbance and would use established access roads and work areas. No wetlands are present within or near the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not require any ground disturbance. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact groundwater and aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not require a change in land use, and no specially-designated areas are in the project vicinity. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact land use or specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The existing and new equipment would be similar in size, shape, color, and configuration. Therefore, the proposed project would not impact visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary and minor dust and vehicle emissions would increase in the local area from vehicle and equipment use during project implementation. There would be no long-term change in air quality following completion of the project.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Project-related noise (i.e., equipment removal and installation, vehicle and equipment use, and human presence) would be minor and temporary and would occur during daylight hours. Long-term operational noise would not change from current ambient conditions.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Work would be completed by professional personnel with a BPA-certified safety water onsite. The project would not generate or use hazardous materials. Therefore, the proposed project would not be expected to impact 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: The T-Mobile communications facility is located on BPA fee-owned property. No notification, involvement, or coordination with adjacent landowners would 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/ William "Walker" Stinnette February 17, 2021
William "Walker" Stinnette, EC-4 Date
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist
Salient CRGT