

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** St. Johns Substation Fiber Optic Installation

**Project No.:** P04992

**Project Manager:** Aaron McNutt TEPS-TPP-1

**Location:** Multnomah County, OR

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B4.7 Fiber Optic Cables

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to modify the overhead fiber route into St. Johns Substation and modify the fiber route within the substation, including the replacement of the patch panel in the control house.

On the north side lawn of the substation property, BPA would install new underground fiber optic conduit by excavating an east-west oriented trench 360 feet long, 4 feet deep, and 4 feet wide. The trench would extend between two new pairs (1 BPA-owned, 1 customer-owned) of 4 by 4 by 4-foot fiber optic vaults. One pair of vaults would be installed near existing Structure 1/1 of the St. Johns-Keeler No. 2 Transmission Line, and the other pair of vaults would be installed near the northeast side of the substation lawn. A new 30-foot-tall wood pole would be installed about 5 feet deep near the pair of vaults near the substation lawn. A guy anchor would be installed about 15 feet south of the new pole, in a 5 by 5-foot hole excavated 10 feet deep to set the anchor, with compacted fill on top. The disturbed areas would be reseeded and may use pollinator friendly seed mix after installation.

BPA would also install a new 40-foot-tall wood pole about 10 feet southwest of existing Structure 7/6 of the Ross-St. Johns No.1 Transmission Line. A guy anchor would be installed 20 feet north of the new pole, in a 5 by 5-foot hole excavated 10 feet deep to set the anchor, with compacted fill on top.

From each of the newly installed BPA owned vaults the fiber would then extend into St Johns Substation through new underground conduit, approximately 200 feet, to the nearest existing manhole located within the substation facility. From the existing manholes the new fiber would then be routed through existing conduit, approximately 550 feet, to the control house and terminate at the new patch panel location.

**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/ Christopher H. Furey  
Christopher H. Furey  
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

<u>/s/ Katey C. Grange</u>	<u>April 28, 2023</u>
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: St. Johns Fiber Optic Replacement**

## **Project Site Description**

The St. Johns Fiber Optic Replacement Project is located in Multnomah County, Oregon. The project site consists of the fenced substation property, the grass lawn area on the north side of the substation, and a small area about 255 feet north of the substation near Structure 7/6 of the Ross-St. Johns No.1 Transmission Line for the wood pole placement. The surrounding parcels to the substation are mostly industrial or associated with Port of Portland transportation and container shipping. A North Lombard Road overpass is adjacent to the substation with an intermittent homeless encampment residing underneath. BPA regularly has a crew sent to clean the BPA substation property outside the fence.

A wetland area is located about 40 feet north of the work area on the north side of the substation and 55 feet southwest of the work area for the new pole near Structure 7/6. Some naturally functional wetland areas of the Smith and Bybee Wetland Natural Area are located about 3,700 feet across the road to the east of the substation. Residential properties are over 0.75 miles to the south of the substation. Chimney Park is about 1,800 feet southeast of the substation. The Port of Portland-Terminal 4 begins about 2,300 feet to the west of the substation, and the Willamette River is located over 4,600 feet west of the substation.

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

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: BPA conducted background research utilizing the Oregon Archaeological Records Remote Access (OARRA) database followed by an intensive field survey of the Area of Potential Effects (APE). Background research conducted by BPA indicated that one previously recorded archaeological resource (35MU44/46) was located in close proximity to the project area. As a result of the archaeological field survey, no evidence of the site was found in the APE, and no historic properties were located in the APE. BPA's Ross-St Johns No. 1 and St Johns-Keeler No. 1 transmission lines meet Multiple Property Document (MPD) minimum eligibility standards for inclusion in National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A (Kramer 2012). However, per BPA's MPD, normal, in kind repair, and maintenance, and upgrades do not necessarily affect the integrity or character defining features of the transmission lines (Kramer 2012).

BPA archaeologist and historian reviewed the proposed activities and determined, per 36 CFR 800.3(a)(1), that this undertaking is a type of activity that does not have potential to cause effects on historic properties.

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon, The Confederated Tribes of the Grande Ronde Community of Oregon, and the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians were sent the BPA archaeologist's determination of no adverse effect to historic properties on March 21, 2023 and no responses were received after 30 days.

## 2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: Some ground-disturbing work would take place outside the fenced substation to install the fiber conduit, vaults, and wood poles for the new fiber route. Disturbed soils would be removed or backfilled and revegetated upon project completion to reduce erosion and prevent soil from entering wetland areas.

Notes:

- Use BMPs for dust and soil control, including proper soil disposal, backfill and revegetation.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: The project area at the substation involves the fenced area of the substation with no vegetation, the grass lawn area on the north side of the substation, and a small area with low growing vegetation near Structure 7/6 of the Ross-St. Johns No.1 Transmission Line. The area around Structure 7/6 is next to a rail line and Lombard Avenue with limited vegetation that would be removed for the new pole installation work. No adverse impacts to ESA listed or special-status plants are expected.

Notes:

- Use of BMPs for dust and soil control would be expected to be used. The disturbed lawn area on the north of the substation would be reseeded after the fiber project is installed and may use pollinator friendly seed mix.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area at the substation is a developed area with a nearby four-lane roadway, developed industrial land, and an adjacent homeless encampment area with limited to no wildlife present; therefore, there would be little to no impacts to wildlife from project-related noise or temporary vegetation disturbance. No adverse impacts to ESA listed or special-status wildlife are expected.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: A swamp pond area is located north of the substation property and south of the location for the new wood pole near Structure 7/6. Work would be kept to the grass lawn area of the substation and a small area near the existing structure with no fill put into the pond. No adverse impacts to waterbodies, floodplain, or fish are expected.

Notes:

- Use of BMPs for erosion control at the project site to avoid any impacts into any nearby wetland.

## 6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: A pond area is located north of the substation property and south of the location for the new wood pole near Structure 7/6. Work would be kept to the grass lawn area of the substation and a small area near the existing structure with no fill put into the pond.

Notes:

- Use of BMPs for soil control.

## **7. Groundwater and Aquifers**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The shallow digging for the fiber conduit and the installation of the vaults and two wood poles are not expected to affect groundwater or the aquifer. No adverse impacts to groundwater or aquifers are expected.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action to replace and install a new fiber optic conduit route would not change existing land use. The fiber optic conduit route would be similar to other transmission line infrastructure owned by BPA and other utilities that is existing near the substation.

## **9. Visual Quality**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be limited visual changes to the project area or surrounding environment by the installation of the new fiber route at the substation and with two wood poles, one at the substation property and one near Structure 7/6.

## **10. Air Quality**

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions would occur during installation.

Notes:

- Use of BMPs for dust and erosion control would be expected to be used at the project site.

## **11. Noise**

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some temporary noise from equipment and vehicle use during installation would occur. No adverse impacts from noise are expected because work would occur during daytime hours for a limited period of time.

## **12. Human Health and Safety**

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: No direct impacts expected for this work to be conducted by qualified personnel. A homeless encampment has existed northwest of the substation, and discarded syringe needles, propane tanks, and several semi-operable vehicles were seen on or near the substation property that could pose a health and safety risk. On a return visit, most of the vehicles and debris were gone but a new set of vehicles and small piles of trash existed.

The substation operator has the substation property outside the fence regularly cleaned for safety and should currently be a clean work site.

Notes:

- Use safety watchers and pre-clean the site location prior to project work for the safety of workers at this location.

### **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: BPA Transmission would be in coordination with BPA St. Johns Substation personnel to implement this project. All work would be conducted on BPA-owned property or property where BPA holds an easement.

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

Signed: /s/ Christopher H. Furey April 28, 2023  
Christopher H. Furey Date  
Environmental Protection Specialist