

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Tonasket Structure Upgrades

Project No.: P04380

Project Manager: Michael Beyer - TEPL

Location: Okanogan County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine maintenance, B1.7 and Electric power substations and interconnection facilities.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to replace four transmission line structures on the East Omak – Oroville No. 1 and East Omak – Tonasket No. 2 115 kV transmission corridors. The replacement of the transmission line structures supports Okanogan PUD's new Tonasket 115kV substation project. Okanogan PUD is rebuilding their Tonasket Substation that improves transmission reliability and upgrades the current sectionalizing disconnects that cannot currently be switched while the BPA transmission lines are energized at the current Tonasket substation. The new Tonasket substation would be built and operated by Okanogan PUD.

BPA's current mono steel-lattice structures 21/9 and 21/10 on both Omak – Oroville and East Omak – Tonasket lines would be replaced with 128-foot-tall single wood pole structures. The new structures would be located within the existing BPA right-of-way approximately 60 feet to the south for the Omak – Oroville structure 21/9 and 45 feet to the south for the East Omak – Tonasket structure 21/9. The new guying for both structures would be a total of six guy supports, three located to the north and three to the east, all within 35 feet of the structure base. The new 21/10 structures would be located approximately 78-feet southwest for the East Omak – Oroville and 57-feet to the west for the East Omak – Tonasket guy supports would be placed within 35 feet to the north and south of each 21/10 structure footings respectively.

The existing steel structures would be decommissioned and removed and the concrete footing pads would be partially removed approximately two feet below grade, the remainder would be left buried in place. The work would be conducted by BPA's transmission line maintenance crews. The new structures would be constructed first. After the new structures are in place, the existing conductor would be disconnected from existing structures and re-strung to the new structures and terminate at each respective 115 kV breaker bays within the new Tonasket substation. The transfer from the existing structures to the new facility would occur during a scheduled fall 2023 midnight BPA outage lasting approximately 6 hours. Removal of the existing structures would occur in the days following the overnight outage. Equipment used would include line trucks, a small crane, excavator and various hand tools. Crews would access the site using the existing access road system.

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/ Nicholas Johnson

Nicholas Johnson
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Katey C. Grange
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: Tonasket Structure Upgrades

Project Site Description

The project location is located in Okanogan County, Washington, approximately three quarters of a mile southwest of Tonasket, Washington. The project area is in Section 21 of Township 37 North, Range 27 East. The project area is bordered by agriculture fields to the east; industrial properties to the north and south; and US highway 97 borders the project area to the west. The gravel Longanecker Road traverses the project area from north to south and would be used to by crews to access. The current Okanogan PUD Tonasket Substation is located within the project area and the new proposed Tonasket Substation would be located in the current gravel lot to the west between the project area and US highway 97. The Okanogan River is located within a quarter mile west of the project area. Several single-family residences are located approximately a half-mile northeast of the project area. Vegetation near the project area and roadside consists of many grasses and shrubs that are endemic to the eastern cascades slopes and foothills ecoregion.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: On February 7, 2022, BPA initiated Section 106 consultation with Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Washington and Washington State Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation Office. BPA did not receive any responses to the initiation letters within 30 days. BPA archaeologist conducted background research using the Washington Information System for Architectural and Archaeological Records Data (WISAARD) database, none of the previously identified cultural resources overlapped with the project APE. The project area was also surveyed in March of 2022. No cultural resources were identified BPA sent the survey report and determination of no historic properties affected letters to all of the consulting parties on July 21, 2022. To date, no responses have been received.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Minimal soil disturbance would occur. The four new transmission line structures would be installed using an auger and removed soil would be used to backfill the new structures. For the transmission structure replacement, concrete footings would be installed within 50 feet of the existing locations. Some excavated soils would be used to back fill the old structure locations, soils would be spread evenly near the old structure footing locations.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some permanent vegetation loss would occur where the new transmission line structures would be installed. The location does not have any Federal or state special-status species present.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project location is within and adjacent to an existing transmission right-of-way and substation, which does not have high quality habitat. Some species may temporarily avoid the area during construction. There is an occupied osprey perch located near the project area; however, the project would occur in the fall and would not impact the nesting period for osprey. The short duration of the project would likely not affect the resident nesting pair of ospreys. There are no Federal or special-status species or habitats that would be impacted by the project.

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 present within the project area. The Okanogan River would be impacted by the proposed actions.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands present within the project area; therefore, there would be no effects to wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground excavation for the project would be minimal and would not affect groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The BPA project would not result in any land use changes. There are no specially designated areas near the project location

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The new structures would be similar in height to the surrounding transmission line structures. The project would not result in any substantial changes to the visual quality of the area.

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 substantial changes to air quality during or after construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise would not change substantially.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During project activities, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Transmission line work would be conducted during a midnight service outage coordinated between BPA and Okanogan PUD to reduce potential human health and safety impacts. All other project activities would not affect 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: BPA Realty staff would notify the underlying landowner of the agriculture field for access to the existing ROW and adjacent landowners of the construction schedule. Transmission line maintenance crews will coordinate with Okanogan PUD and BPA control centers to perform the work during the planned midnight outage. No other notifications would be required for the project

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

Signed: /s/ Nicholas Johnson July 18, 2023
Nicholas Johnson Date
Environmental Protection Specialist