

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Fiber Optic Cable and Communications Equipment Installation for the Technical Services Building (East Campus)

**Project No.:** P03911

**Project Manager:** Scott Lissit – TEPF-3

**Location:** Clark County, Washington

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B4.6 Additions and Modifications to Transmission Facilities, B4.7 Fiber Optic Cable

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to install new telecommunications fiber optic cable, appurtenances, and infrastructure to support the Technical Services Building (TSB) located on the JD Ross Complex.

About 2,500 linear feet of new conduit and supporting manholes would be installed between two existing vaults: one vault located about 100 feet northeast of BPA's Hazardous Materials (HazMat) building and the other located at the intersection of North Road and the spur road that leads north to the Construction Services Building (CSB). The new conduit would be installed up to 6 feet underground using directional drilling methods. Directional boring pits would be excavated at the entry and exit points, at about 1,000 feet apart, and would be about 10 feet wide by 10 feet long and up to 6 feet deep. New vaults, about 4 feet wide by 4 feet long and up to 6 feet deep, would be installed at about every 500 feet along the new conduit path. One of the new vaults would be installed on the north side of BPA's existing perimeter fence, between the fence and the Portland Vancouver Junction Railroad line, near the northeast corner of BPA's main warehouse. All others would be located within the fenced area of the Ross Complex.

A new vault would be installed between the fuel service station and the Communications Building. New conduit would be installed in a trench about 1 foot wide by 3 feet long between the new vault and a nearby existing vault, and would provide new access to the Communications Building. Another new vault would be installed about 60 feet east of the intersection of North Road and the spur road.

All directional bore pits, handholes, and vaults (with the exception of one), would be installed within the perimeter chain link fence of the Ross Complex, and the majority of which would be located within asphalt, concrete, or sidewalk surfaces.

Once the supporting infrastructure is installed, including fiber distribution panels and conduit to protect intermittent fiber conduit pathways within BPA buildings, about 7,000 linear feet of new 72-count fiber optic cable would be installed throughout the eastern portion of the J.D. Ross Complex to establish the new fiber optic cable network. This includes a segment of existing conduit that passes under unused Portland Vancouver Junction Railroad line tracks.

**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/ Becky Hill

Becky Hill

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

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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:** Fiber Optic Cable and Communications Equipment Installation for the Technical Services Building (East Campus)

## **Project Site Description**

The project site is located on BPA fee-owned property within BPA's J.D. Ross Complex located in Vancouver, Washington. The 260-acre Ross Complex consists of the Ross Substation, Ross Maintenance Headquarters, and other BPA support facilities. The complex is surrounded by residential neighborhoods on the north, east, and south, while Highway 99 and Interstate-5 are located about 250 feet and 500 feet, respectively, on the west side of the complex. The complex is split north-south by Portland Vancouver Junction Railroad line tracks and a riparian corridor associated with Cold Canyon Creek and Burnt Bridge Creek, which are designated freshwater critical habitats for Lower Columbia River coho salmon. This east-west riparian corridor connects the creeks and their floodplains to freshwater-forested shrub wetlands located along both sides of Interstate-5 and Highway 99. The east campus work areas are primarily comprised of asphalt roadways, parking lots, and concrete walkways and sidewalks. Additional work areas include a small lawn area (about 400 square feet) within the complex's fence, and another 400 square foot area between the north side of the chain link fence and the railroad tracks that is regularly maintained for short growing vegetation.

## Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

### 1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The Ross Complex is an eligible Historic District; however, BPA determined that no historic properties or contributing resources would be impacted by the proposed action. On October 31, 2023, the BPA archaeologist initiated Section 106 consultation with the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and the Cowlitz Indian Tribe. The initiation letter included BPA's determination that implementation of the proposed undertaking would result in no adverse effect to the historic district or historic properties, and would result in no adverse effect to historic transmission lines. On November 2, 2023, DAHP concurred with BPA's determination. The Cowlitz Indian Tribe responded on November 29, 2023, with a request for a Post Review Discovery Plan to be available to the contractors during construction activities.

Notes:

- A Post Review Discovery Procedure form with contact information for the BPA cultural resources lead, would be supplied to the construction contractor prior to commencing construction work. Should cultural resources be discovered during project activities, then all project work in the area shall stop, and the cultural resources lead shall be notified immediately.

## 2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Directional boring pits would be about 10 feet wide by 10 feet long by 6 feet deep. In total, the boring pits and small amount of trenching would result in about 1,000 square feet of ground disturbance in areas primarily covered by asphalt roadways, concrete, paved parking areas and sidewalks. About 800 square feet of soil disturbance would occur in grass lawn and unmaintained vegetated areas just outside the perimeter chain link fence. Best management practices (BMPs) would be implemented to prevent the migration of sediment off-site.

Notes:

- Test soils for hazardous materials, which if found, would be disposed of off-site according to local, state, and federal regulations.
- Implement a BPA-approved Erosion and Sediment Control Plan (ESCP) that is guided by Washington Department of Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington.
- Implement a BPA-approved revegetation plan as soon as practicable after disturbance.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No special-status plant species or suitable habitat for special-status plant species are present in the project area. Therefore, the proposed action would have no effect on special-status plant species. About 400 square feet of low-quality habitat, regularly mowed lawn within the fence, and an area about 400 square feet in size that is regularly maintained for low growing vegetation just outside of the fence, would be temporarily disturbed as a result of the proposed project. Vegetation that may be temporarily or permanently impacted during trenching and boring activities include Scotch broom, blackberry, and native and non-native grasses.

Notes:

- Implement a BPA-approved revegetation plan for areas with disturbed vegetation as soon as practicable after disturbance.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: About 800 square feet of low-quality and highly maintained habitat would be disturbed as a result of the proposed project. Minor and temporary disturbance of wildlife could occur from elevated noise during construction. Because the work would be occurring adjacent to a currently operating substation and within the overall complex, any wildlife present are used to human presence and noise. No special-status wildlife species or suitable habitat are present within or near the project area. Therefore, the proposed action would have no effect on special-status wildlife species or habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No water bodies or special-status fish species are present within the project area, and the project area is not located within a floodplain. During construction, BMPs would prevent indirect impacts, such as soil or drilling mud migrating off-site to water bodies, floodplains, or fish that may be located beyond the boundary of the project area. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact water bodies, floodplains, and special-status fish.

Notes:

- Implement a BPA-approved ESCP that is guided by Washington Department of Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington.
- Implement a BPA-approved Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) during construction.
- Maintain an oil/fuel spill kit on-site during construction to address containment, cleanup, and disposal in the event of a spill.

## 6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: No wetlands are present within the project area. BMPs would prevent indirect impacts, such as soil or drilling mud migrating off-site to wetlands that may be located beyond the boundary of the project area. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact wetlands.

Notes:

- Implement a BPA-approved ESCP that is guided by Washington Department of Ecology's Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington
- Implement a BPA-approved SWPPP during construction.
- Maintain an oil/fuel spill kit on-site during construction to address containment, cleanup, and disposal in the event of a spill.

## 7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Ground disturbance is unlikely to reach depths to groundwater and no new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers are proposed. BMPs would prevent impacts from unintended spills to groundwater or aquifers. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

Notes:

- Maintain an oil/fuel spill kit on-site during construction to address containment, cleanup, and disposal in the event of a spill.

## 8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The installation of telecommunications equipment and fiber optic cable would not change the land use of the Ross Complex. The Ross Complex is an eligible Historic District, however, no historic properties or contributing resources would be impacted by the proposed action. The installation of fiber optic cable within an existing conduit that passes north-south under the railroad tracks would not change the land use or function of the railroad corridor.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The installation of telecommunications equipment and fiber optic cable would be entirely underground. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact visual quality of the area.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction activities would result in a minor and temporary increase in dust and vehicle emissions in the local area. BMPs, such as turning off vehicles when not in use, would be implemented to limit the amount of emissions released in the local area.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: During construction, use of vehicles and equipment and general construction activities would create noise above current ambient conditions. However, noise impacts would be temporary and intermittent and would only occur during typical working hours (approximately 7am to 7pm). 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: Construction would be completed by trained professionals who would follow all applicable safety precautions as detailed in the site-specific Safety Plan, which would be maintained on-site during construction and updated, as needed. The public and non-construction related workers would not have access to the construction area while work is ongoing unless they first attend a mandatory training or are escorted by a trained construction worker. Work areas would be secured when construction crews are not present. Therefore, the proposed action 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 proposed action would occur on BPA fee-owned property. BPA's realty specialist is coordinating with Portland Vancouver Junction Railroad company.

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

Signed: /s/ Becky Hill

Becky Hill, ECT-4

Environmental Protection Specialist

December 1, 2023

Date