

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Ostrea Solar Project Interconnection

Project No.: G0596

Project Manager: Mr. Thong Tran TEPS-TPP-1

Location: Yakima County, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.11 Electrical power substations and interconnection facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to allow a large generator interconnection request in Yakima County, Washington. Cypress Creek Renewables, LLC (Cypress Creek) would interconnect its 80-megawatt Ostrea Solar Project on BPA's Midway-Moxee No.1 115 kilovolt (kV) transmission line near Sunnyside in Yakima County, Washington. The interconnection point would be located along the Midway-Moxee No. 1 transmission line approximately 10 miles southwest of BPA's Midway Substation. To support this interconnection, BPA would install a tap structure that would connect to Cypress Creek's generation line extending from the solar development. BPA would also modify the existing Sunnyside Radio Tower Station by installing a new tower and associated infrastructure to support grid communications.

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.

Christopher H. Furey
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

Sarah T. Biegel
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.

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Project Site Description

The project is located in south central Washington in Yakima County. The project area is comprised of two discreet areas separated by approximately five miles of open space. The first part of the project area is located along the Midway-Moxee No.1 115 kV transmission line and is located immediately north of Highway (HWY) 24 which is approximately 1.6 miles west of the intersection of HWY 24 and HWY 241. The second part of the project area is located immediately west of HWY 241 and generally meanders along a dirt access road northwest for approximately 4.7 miles before reaching the existing Sunnyside Radio Tower Station site. The two parts of the project possess relatively similar characteristics and are collectively referred to as the project area. The project site and surrounding area is best characterized as an area of disturbed soils with nearby cattle and horse pasture land with some disturbed shrub-steppe habitat of arid sagebrush-bunchgrass. The NWI datasets were reviewed to identify potentially jurisdictional wetlands and other Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) regulated under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA) and no wetlands were within 150 feet or of the broader vicinity of the project area. The Columbia River is about 6 miles north of the project area.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The BPA archaeologist reviewed the proposed activities and determined that these activities at the project area do not have potential to cause effects to historic or cultural resources.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: There would be minimal soil disturbance for installation of the tap and new communications tower. Some digging would be necessary for the project. Work would be occurring in areas of dry soils impacted by previous grazing activities in the project area.

Notes:

- Use Best Management Practices (BMPs) to limit soil transport by wind and water during construction.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: Work would be occurring in areas of dry soils impacted by previous grazing activities in the project area. Some brush may be cleared where needed for construction.

Notes:

- Re-seed any cleared areas with a BPA-approved seed mix where necessary.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: Work would be occurring in areas of dry soils impacted by previous grazing activities in the project area. Construction of the tap and communications tower is expected to occur during daytime hours with no effect expected to any ESA-listed or special-status species.

Notes:

- Utilize appropriate BMPs and fugitive dust plan to limit wind erosion. Include the bird diverters to limit impacts to birds and other non-listed species.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: The Columbia River is about 6 miles north of the project area. No streams are within 1,000 feet of the project area.

Notes:

- Utilize appropriate BMPs and fugitive dust plan to limit wind and water erosion of soils.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: No wetland areas are nearby and project work would avoid such areas. Work would be occurring in the project area in areas of generally dry soil that have been impacted by previous grazing.

Notes:

- Utilize appropriate BMPs and fugitive dust plan to limit wind and water erosion of soils.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would not impact groundwater or aquifers. Infiltration to groundwater and aquifers would not be adversely impacted by the construction as runoff and erosion at the site would be controlled.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would take place on substation property consistent with activities at large substations without impact to any specially-designated areas.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be limited visual changes to the project area or surrounding environment. The completed work may be noticeable but would constitute a small overall change to the current visual state as it would occur at project areas with existing communications equipment and existing transmission line.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions would occur during installation. There would be small, sporadic increases in machine exhaust during periods of active work during construction.

Notes:

- Keep dust to a minimum in adhering to BMPs for ground-disturbing actions as also noted in the sections above.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours. No ongoing noise increase expected.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Workers on the project would be required to follow all applicable state and/or Federal safety standards as much of the work would occur from inside the substation grounds, and if work occurs outside, access to the active work sites would be controlled and monitored.

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 project manager will coordinate with neighboring landowners to coordinate access and address any issues during construction.

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

Signed:

Christopher Furey
Environmental Protection Specialist