

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Chief Joseph Substation Upgrade and 4160V Chief Joseph Dam Line Replacement and Re-route

Project No.: P01037

Project Manager: Jay Chester – TEPS-TPP-1

Location: Douglas County, WA

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.7 Electronic Equipment, B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities, B4.11 Electric power substations and interconnection facilities, B4.13 Upgrading and rebuilding existing powerlines.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to remove, replace, upgrade, and/or modify outdated equipment at Chief Joseph Substation and to replace out-of-service conductor on the 4160V Chief Joseph Dam Line. The purpose of this work is to replace the end-of-life station service system at Chief Joseph Substation. BPA would perform the following tasks at the Chief Joseph Substation: Remove and replace transformer bank #2 and disconnects. Remove and replace transformer bank #1 tertiary equipment, disconnects, meter capacitive voltage transformer, voltage transformers, and fuses. Remove and replace various Bay 7, 8, and 15 230-kilovolt (kV) disconnects, and replace various 500kV motor operated disconnects. Replace wood pole FOST-CHJO No. 1 structure 1/7 and associated hardware located inside the 500kV yard. Reuse, reinforcement, and/or repair concrete pillars. Ground disturbance inside the yard would consist of adding and removing equipment footings, adding concrete anchors and adding electrical conduits and grounding cables. Equipment used to perform this work would include a combination of cranes, bulldozers, backhoes, excavators, and work trucks. Substation work would occur within the fenced, previously-disturbed substation yard.

There is approximately 3,640 feet of 4160V overhead power line that extends between US Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) Chief Joseph Powerhouse and BPA's Chief Joseph Substation. BPA proposes to replace out-of-service conductor on the 4160V Chief Joseph Dam Line Powerhouse to Chief Joseph substation. BPA proposes to re-reroute approximately 1,100 feet of the 4160V line from wood pole structures to existing steel H-frame towers. The existing wood poles would be retired in place and not removed. Equipment used to perform this work would include pulling/tensioning equipment and bucket trucks to remove and restring the conductor. Proposed actions outside the substation yard would be limited to existing structures, roads, landings, turnarounds, and existing pulling/tensioning sites. There would be no new ground disturbance outside of the substation yard for the overhead power line activities. Equipment staging would be inside the yard and/or on BPA fee-owned property.

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/ Nick Cisney

Nick Cisney

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Katey Grange

Katey C. Grange

NEPA Compliance Officer Date: July 16, 2024

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: Chief Joseph Substation Upgrade and 4160V Chief Joseph Dam Line Replacement and Re-route

Project Site Description

The project would occur at existing BPA Chief Joseph Substation on BPA fee-owned property and US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) owned property in Douglas County, Washington. Most of the proposed actions, including any material laydown or equipment staging, would occur within the existing footprint of the fenced substation yard which has been heavily disturbed and consists of electrical yard rock that is maintained clear of vegetation. Proposed actions outside the substation yard would be limited to existing structures, roads, landings, turnarounds, and existing pulling/tensioning sites. Outside the substation yard, the surrounding area is primarily characterized by agricultural land use interspersed with isolated undeveloped shrub steppe.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: The Chief Joseph Substation was energized in 1958 during BPA's system expansion period and is considered an eligible historic resource. Although the substation is considered eligible for listing on to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) the proposed transformer bank, bay, disconnect, and wood pole work is considered part of functionality and appropriate maintenance and will not impact the integrity of setting, materials, location, workmanship, design, feeling, or association for the historic switchyard. Additionally, the proposed conductor replacement and re-route would have no potential to affect the integrity of the transmission lines, as the replacement of the conductor is also considered a normal and in kind replacement. Finally, the conductor re-route and replacement would not result in any ground disturbing activities as existing roads, graveled lots, and substation staging areas would be utilized during this work. The area surrounding the re-route of the conductor was surveyed in 2015, and the adjacent access roads and substation boundary were surveyed in 2014 and 2015 respectively. None of these surveys identified surface or subsurface archaeological resources. Based on the information provided, BPA has determined, per 36 CFR 800.3(a)(1), that this undertaking is a type of activity that does not have the potential to cause effects on historic properties, assuming such historic properties were present.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Localized ground and soil disturbance would occur during construction in the existing yard. Installation of the new footings, concrete anchors, electrical conduits, and grounding

cables may involve limited excavation into native soils below the substation select fill and yard rock, and the project could generate excess material beyond what could be used as backfill. Any excess spoils generated during project activities shall be hauled off site to an approved location. Proposed work occurring outside the substation yard would be limited to existing structures, roads, landings, turnarounds, and two existing pulling/tensioning sites.

Notes: The following minimization measures would be implemented.

- During construction, all appropriate Best Management Practices (BMP) would be used to implement site specific erosion and sediment control.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Proposed work would occur within the existing substation yard, which is maintained clear of vegetation and immediate surrounding areas. No known Federal/State special-status plants are present in the project area. Minimal disturbance to vegetation is anticipated to work areas outside the fence. Vegetation would be cut or crushed and not removed. The work area outside the fence would be restored to pre-project condition.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project would have minimal effect to wildlife and habitat due to the increased human presence and elevated noise associated with the proposed activity. However, disturbance would be temporary and limited to an already impacted ROW and substation yard. Therefore, wildlife and associated habitat would not be affected long term. The project area does not include critical habitat for any Federal or State special-status species.

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

Potential for Significance: No with conditions

Explanation: There are no water bodies, floodplains, or fish-bearing streams present near the project. There is no in-water or over water work being proposed and the nearest work area is over 300 feet away from Foster Creek. Therefore, the proposed work would not impact water bodies and floodplains and would have no effect on special-status fish species or habitats.

Notes: The following minimization measures would be implemented to prevent sediment or contaminants from reaching any waterbodies.

- Erosion control measures would be implemented to prevent sedimentation or dust.
- Appropriately stocked spill response kits would be located on vehicles and/or staged onsite.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no wetlands present within 400 feet of the project areas.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Ground excavation for footings would not reach groundwater depth below the substation yard. Standard construction Best Management Practices (BMPs) would reduce the potential for inadvertent spills of hazardous materials that could contaminate groundwater or aquifers. No new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers are proposed. There is no ground excavation planned for proposed work outside the substation yard. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact groundwater or aquifers.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action is consistent with current land uses and the project site is not located in a specially designated area. Therefore, the proposed action would not impact land use or 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 proposed work would involve the relocation of the 4160V transmission line from wood pole structures to existing steel H-frame structures. The relocation of the conductor would result in minimal visual change.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction activities have the potential to result in minor and temporary increases in dust and emissions in the local area. Standard erosion and sediment controls would be implemented, as needed. There would be no change to air quality from existing conditions once construction is complete.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project site is in a rural area surrounded by agricultural lands, undeveloped shrub steppe, and other electric transmission lines and equipment. The activities in the substation yard would be consistent with routine operation and maintenance of an electrical facility. The activities outside the substation would be consistent with transmission line structure hardware and equipment maintenance, replacement, and installation. During construction, use of vehicles and equipment, and other general construction activities, could temporarily and intermittently produce noise at

levels higher than current conditions. There would be no change in ambient noise from existing conditions once construction is complete.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All standard safety protocols would be followed throughout project construction, and standard construction BMPs would minimize risk to human, health, and safety. 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 project area is on BPA fee-owned land and US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) property. BPA's Realty Specialist would coordinate access to USACE property.

Signed: /s/ Nick Cisney

Nick Cisney

Physical Scientist (Environmental)

Date: July 16, 2024