

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Rocky Reach Substation Transformer and Disconnect Switch Replacements

Project No.: P03556

Project Manager: Daniel Meier, TEPP-TPP-1

Location: Douglas County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.7 Electronic equipment; B4.11 - Electric power substations and interconnection facilities

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to replace equipment at BPA's existing Rocky Reach Substation in Douglas County, Washington. The proposed action would replace a spare transformer and other equipment that has exceeded its useful life. The project would replace a 345/230 kilovolt (kV) transformer with a new transformer, relocate the existing transformer to a new foundation for use as a spare, and permanently remove the current spare transformer.

New oil containment systems would be installed around the footings of the new 345/230kV transformer and relocated spare transformer. In addition, the proposed work would replace disconnect switches, upgrade switch footings, and install updates to relaying equipment.

All work would occur within the existing substation yard. No new land rights acquisition is required, and the action would not require any new access roads or road improvements.

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/ James Raspen

James Raspen, EPI-4

Civil Engineer (Environmental)

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer Date: July 19, 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: Rocky Reach Substation Transformer and Disconnect Switch Replacements

Project Site Description

The proposed project would occur on BPA fee-owned land at Rocky Reach Substation in Douglas County, Washington. All proposed ground-disturbing activities would occur within the existing footprint of the fenced substation yard. The substation yard consists of compacted, non-native yard rock and is maintained clear of vegetation. The surrounding landscape is characterized by undeveloped, hilly shrub/scrub environments.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: A cultural records search and review found no previously recorded historic resources, cultural resources, or previously conducted cultural studies located within the proposed project disturbance areas at the Rocky Reach Substation. In addition, the relay house within the switchyard was determined not eligible for listing under the NHPA. BPA's Post-Review Discovery Procedure would be on site.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Localized ground and soil disturbance would occur during construction in the existing yard. Installation of the new oil containment system requires excavation into native soils and the project would generate excess material beyond what can be used as backfill. Standard erosion control measures would be implemented to prevent sediment migration off site. Any excess spoils generated during project activities not used as backfill shall be hauled off site to an approved location.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work would be in the substation yard, which is maintained free of vegetation. No Federal or state-listed plants, special-status plants or habitats, or designated critical habitat occur within proximity of the proposed project.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ESA-listed or special-status species were identified that may be impacted by the proposed action. Therefore, the proposed action would not effect ESA-listed threatened, endangered, or proposed species; designated or proposed critical habitat; candidate species; state special-status species of concern; or priority habitats. The proposed project

is inside a fenced, gravel yard maintained free of vegetation. Minor increases in noise and human presence during construction have the potential to effect wildlife in proximity of the site; however, impacts from noise would be temporary.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The existing substation is located in an upland area approximately 800 feet east of the Columbia River. The Columbia River is designated critical habitat for bull trout, the Upper Columbia River DPS of steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*), and the Upper Columbia River ESU of spring-run chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*). There are no tributaries or drainages within proximity of the fenced substation yard that have the potential to be impacted by the proposed action. Typical erosion control BMPs would be implemented and no riparian habitat, water bodies, floodplains, or aquatic species would be affected from the proposed work in the gravel substation yard.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No wetlands are present inside or adjacent to the substation yard.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: According to the Department of Ecology, recent (2021) well logs near the site indicate groundwater in the area is more than 90 feet below ground surface. Ground excavation for footings and oil containment upgrades would not likely reach groundwater depth below the substation yard. Standard construction 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. The project includes adding oil containment upgrades around transformers that would capture oil in the event of equipment failure or spill, and minimize any potential for impact to groundwater in the future. 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.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed equipment replacements are similar in size and appearance to existing equipment and the associated maintenance modifications in the substation yard would not have a noticeable impact on the baseline visual quality at the site.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Construction activities have the potential to result in a minor and temporary increase in dust and emissions in the local area. Standard erosion and sediment controls would be implemented for dust abatement, as needed. There would be no permanent or long-term change in air quality after completion of the project.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The substation is co-located with other transmission and power facilities and surrounded by agricultural fields. The proposed activities in the substation yard would be consistent with routine operation and maintenance of an electric facility. During construction, use of vehicles and equipment and general construction activities could temporarily and intermittently produce noise at levels higher than current ambient conditions. There would be no permanent or long-term change in ambient noise after completion of the project.

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.

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: Project activities would only occur in the existing BPA Substation on BPA fee-owned property adjacent to a larger Chelan County PUD (PUD) substation and power facilities. Notification and coordination with the PUD is necessary prior to work beginning. If access to the PUD substation yard is necessary, contract workers would be badged or escorted by an individual with a Chelan County PUD badge. A realty specialist would contact adjacent landowners prior to starting construction activities, as needed.

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

Signed: /s/ James Raspen Date: July 19, 2024
James Raspen, EPI-4
Physical Scientist (Environmental)