Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy

Proposed Action: Snohomish Substation Maintenance Project

Project No.: P03611

Project Manager: Matt Joerin, TEPP-TPP-1

Location: Snohomish County and 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 perform maintenance and in-kind upgrades to improve substation reliability at the existing BPA Snohomish Substation in Snohomish County, Washington. The project would upgrade older power transformers including a single phase 345/230-kilovolt (kV) transformer, six single phase 230/115kV transformers, and a three phase 230/115kV transformer. The oil containment system at the site would be upgraded based on design criteria to accommodate the new transformers. The project would also replace associated equipment due for replacement including disconnect switches, risers and surge arresters, updates to the communication and grid metering control system equipment, new footings, and removing the existing engine generator.

The proposed project would decommission and remove an outdated engine generator building and associated diesel fuel tank. A mobile engine generator would be used in lieu of a permanent one to improve substation reliability. Most of the proposed work would occur within the fenced substation yard. Minor improvements to stormwater outfalls on BPA fee-owned property would be required which are located outside the substation yard fence but in disturbed, graded areas.

Updates to the communication and relay control system at the Snohomish Substation would include new GPS relay equipment installation at another site, the BPA Chief Joseph Substation located in Douglas County, Washington. The new communication and relay equipment upgrades at Chief Joseph Substation would be similar to existing and installed equipment inside two existing buildings, the control house and a communications relay house. The GPS system would require mounting two new, small GPS antennas to the west side of the relay house building.

All proposed work would occur on BPA fee-owned land, either inside the existing fenced substation yards or immediately adjacent for the outfalls. No road improvements are required to access sites for the proposed project. Any temporary material yards or construction staging areas would be identified during design and located in previously disturbed areas on BPA 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/ *James Raspen*
James Raspen, EPI-4
Environmental Engineer

Concur:

/s/ *Katey Grange*
Katey C. Grange
NEPA Compliance Officer Date: *July 24, 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: Snohomish Substation Maintenance Project

Project Site Description

The proposed project is at the existing BPA Snohomish Substation in Snohomish County, Washington, primarily within the fenced yard with minor stormwater outfall improvements outside the yard. The project would include communications equipment inside two existing buildings at the BPA Chief Joseph Substation in Douglas County, Washington. Material laydown or equipment staging area would occur in substation yard on BPA property that consists of compacted, non-native rock and is maintained clear of vegetation. The substation footprint is comprised of previously graded fill material, vegetation, and yard rock along the perimeter of the fenced yard. The surrounding area is primarily characterized by residential development, vegetated areas and maintained BPA transmission line right-of-way.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The Snohomish Substation was determined not eligible for listing the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The Chief Joseph Substation is considered a historic property; however, no asset is considered individually eligible for listing in the NRHP. Previously conducted archaeological surveys within 50 meters of the Snohomish and Chief Joseph substations did not identify any cultural resources, there is a relatively low likelihood of intact archaeological resources being present in the vicinity. Based on the project scope and findings of a cultural records review for the Snohomish Substation, BPA initiated formal consultation on the APE with a determination that no historic properties would be affected by the proposed undertaking. A concurrence request letter was sent on November 25, 2022 to the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and consulting parties including the Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe, the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians, the Tulalip Tribes, and the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe. No responses were received from DAHP or consulting parties. An Inadvertent Discovery Plan will be implemented during project construction.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Localized ground and soil disturbance would occur during construction mainly in the existing substation yard. Minor soil disturbance would occur outside the yard within previously disturbed and graded areas during upgrades to the existing stormwater system. Excess spoils generated by the project would be hauled off site to an approved location. Standard erosion control measures would be implemented to prevent sediment migration off site.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary disturbance of approximately 0.1 acres of land would occur within the existing substation footprint outside the fenced yard. The area is mainly comprised of low-growing and maintained vegetation, and Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus armeniacus*). No federal or state-listed plants, special-status plant or habitats, or designated critical habitat occur within the proposed project area; therefore, the project will have no effect on protected plant species or habitat.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The majority of the proposed project would occur inside fenced, gravel yards maintained free of vegetation. Approximately 0.1 acres of vegetation (mainly invasive species) outside the existing substation yard could be removed or disturbed for stormwater outfall maintenance and improvements. Minor increases in noise and human presence during construction has the potential to effect wildlife in proximity of the site; however, impacts from noise would be temporary. No ESA or state-listed threatened, endangered, candidate or proposed species, designated and proposed critical habitat, state special-status species of concern, or priority habitats were identified that would be affected by the project. Work within the existing substation footprint and fenced yards at the Snohomish and Chief Joseph substations would temporarily increase noise and human presence during construction and has the potential to have a small effect on wildlife in proximity of the site.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Freshwater wetlands to the north and outside the footprint of the Snohomish Substation yard have been historically engineered to drain to a conveyance ditch that may eventually discharge to an unnamed tributary to Snohomish River. The substation is approximately 1,800 feet northeast from the tributary and 4,000 feet northeast of the Snohomish River. The Snohomish River and this tributary are designated critical habitat for the Puget Sound Distinct Population Segment (DPS) of steelhead (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*). Additionally, the Snohomish River is designated critical habitat for bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*) and the Puget Sound DPS of Chinook salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*). The project area is not mapped by Federal Emergency Management Administration as a designated floodplain. Typical erosion control BMPs would be implemented during project construction would prevent sediment from leaving the work areas and entering any nearby waterbodies. No riparian habitat, water bodies, floodplains or fish-bearing streams are present nor would be affected by the proposed project elements.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Freshwater wetlands are mapped by the National Wetland Inventory in proximity of the project area to the north and outside the substation footprint. Standard work area isolation and erosion and sediment control BMPs would be implemented during project construction

would prevent sediment from leaving the work areas and entering any nearby wetlands. Work proposed would have no effect on nearby wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Shallow groundwater may be encountered for excavations roughly seven feet or greater below ground surface. No critical aquifer recharge areas, well heads, source water or groundwater protection areas occur within or adjacent to the project area. Dewatering activities would be carried out according to current BPA specifications. Standard construction BMPs and Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures Plan would reduce the potential for inadvertent spills of hazardous materials that could contaminate groundwater. No new wells or other uses of groundwater or aquifers are proposed.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed action at Snohomish Substation 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 footing 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, as needed. There would be no change to air quality after construction is completed.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The substation is co-located with residential, commercial, and industrial development. 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: 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: An engine generator building and foundations would be demolished as part of the project. Demolition waste would be disposed of at an approved facility.

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: All work on BPA fee-owned property and no visual or other effects to adjacent landowner. If needed, a realty specialist would contact adjacent landowner(s) prior to starting construction activities.

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*
James Raspen, EPI-4 Date: *July 24, 2024*
Physical Scientist (Environmental)