

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Albion Butte Communication Facility Upgrades

Project Manager: Vincent Majors TEP-CSB-2

Location: Cassia County, Idaho

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.19 Microwave, meteorological, and radio towers

Description of the Proposed Action: BPA proposes to replace the outdated engine generator building at its Albion Butte Radio Station to support an agreement between BPA and US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) for a new communications path from USBR's Shaffer Butte Radio Station to BPA's Thunder Ridge Radio Station. USBR would be responsible for the Shaffer Butte to Albion Butte connection and BPA would be responsible for the Albion Butte to Thunder Ridge connection. The improved system would address both agencies actions to improve the level of security of Federal telecommunications facilities pursuant to the North American Electric Reliability Corporation standards for critical infrastructure protection requirements and improve the telecommunication reliability for monitoring and compliance with the Western Electricity Coordinating Council reliability standards, as well as to support USBR's conversion to a centrally operated supervisory control and data acquisition system for control of dam operations.

In support of the agreement, an addition to the existing Albion Butte Radio Station building would be built. The addition would house a new engine generator and battery/tenant room for USBR. BPA would install two antennas on the existing communication tower. USBR would collocate their communications equipment within the new addition and install three new antennas on the existing tower. New radios and support equipment would be installed inside the new building.

The proposed new addition would measure 24-feet by 17-feet long and would be constructed to blend with the existing communications building. Construction activities would include the demolition and removal of the old engine generator building and asbestos abatement. A temporary engine generator and data cable would be installed while construction continues. About 8 cubic yards of rock would be brought to the site and used to protect the northeast side of the foundation and to create a small retaining wall on the southeast side of the existing building. The existing sidewalk would be widened and expanded about 35 square feet to provide new door access to the addition. Minimal grading would be needed on site. An approximate 50-foot by 50-foot staging area for equipment would be located on the northwest side of the existing building. Construction would take about 3-4 months.

All ground disturbing activities would be limited to the property that BPA currently leases from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and no new access roads would be required. BPA and BLM have reviewed the proposed action and all land use agreement terms, conditions, and stipulations would be coordinated prior to construction. It is anticipated that construction would take three to four months to complete.

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, July 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/ Claire McClory

Claire McClory
Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Stacy L. Mason

Stacy L. Mason
NEPA Compliance Officer

Date: July 11, 2016

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 existing Albion Butte Communication Facility is located on BLM land in Cassia County, Idaho along the ridgeline of the Cotterel Mountains. The communication site is located within a rock compound that overlooks the ridgeline. Immediately surrounding the site is a rock parking area.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> IDSHPO concurrence on no adverse effect to historic properties May 19, 2016.		
2. Geology and Soils	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> Minimal soil disturbance.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Use weed-free materials or inert materials for mulching and for erosion control. ➤ Conserve top soil during excavation and reuse as cover on disturbed areas to facilitate regrowth of vegetation. 		
3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> No special-status species present. Minimal vegetation removal proposed.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Restrict construction activities to the area needed to work effectively. Construction crews will be instructed to restrict vehicles to designated areas and existing roads as much as possible. 		
4. Wildlife (including federal/state special-status species and habitats)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<u>Explanation:</u> The project is located within BLM-designated sage grouse priority habitat. A lekking site has been identified within 2 miles of the project area. In addition, a golden eagle nest is located within a half mile of the project area.		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To prevent nest abandonment and harm to golden eagle fledglings, no heavy machinery will be operated until it is either visually confirmed by a qualified biologist that the fledglings have vacated the nest or until after July 15. ➤ No repeated or sustained behavioral disturbance (visual, noise over 10 decibels) to lekking sage grouse from 6:00pm to 9:00am within 2 miles of leks during lekking season (March 1-May 15). ➤ Avoid mechanized disturbance in sage grouse nesting habitat during nesting season (May 1-June 30). ➤ Avoid mechanized disturbance during winter in sage grouse wintering areas (November 1-March 1). 		

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



Explanation: None present.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: None present.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: None present.

8. **Land Use and Specially Designated Areas**



Explanation: No change to existing land use; not a specially designated area.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The communication building extension would be visually consistent with the adjacent communication facilities. The communication site is visible from segments of the California Trail. Visual simulations from the trail show that the building and antenna additions would result in a negligible increase in the opacity of the tower across the landscape.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: Small amount of dust and vehicle emissions during construction.

- All asbestos would be removed and disposed of in accordance with applicable regulations by a licensed abatement contractor.
- Require dust abatement on road and construction site, if necessary.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Temporary construction noise during daylight hours.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: A positive impact to human health and safety would occur by reducing potential exposure to asbestos.

- All asbestos would be removed and disposed of in accordance with applicable regulations by a licensed abatement contractor.
- Maintain appropriate emergency spill response materials on-site to control unexpected and unanticipated releases of petroleum-based products or other hazardous materials. Disposal of any spill material will be in accordance with applicable state and federal requirements.

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, if necessary:

- Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

- 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, if necessary:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: BPA and USBR have been working with the BLM for a modification to the existing right-of-way agreement that would allow BPA to expand the existing control house and collocate with USBR.

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

Signed: /s/ Claire McClory
Claire McClory, ECT-4

Date: July 11, 2016