

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration

Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Ashton Hill Generator Replacement

Project Manager: Vincent “Charley” Majors—TEP-CSB-2

Location: Fremont 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: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to remove an existing generator, a 3,000 gallon propane tank, and exhaust fans and switches, which are associated with the operation of an existing communication tower, on Ashton Hill in eastern Idaho. BPA would then install a new 30-kW generator and exhaust piping, new switches, and a new 3,000 gallon propane tank, with associated footings, all within the same footprint as the removed equipment. A new liquid propane line would be routed from the new tank to the new generator. New exhaust fans, control panel, and a wall-mounted heater would also be installed in the generator room. After the equipment installation would be completed, the ground surrounding the project area would be leveled and gravel would be added, as needed. Finally, minor improvements would be made to the existing access road, including grading and additional gravel.

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/ Beth Belanger

Beth Belanger

Contract Environmental Protection Specialist

Motus Recruiting & Staffing

Reviewed by:

/s/ Gene Lynard

Gene Lynard

Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel

Date: July 15, 2016

Sarah T. Biegel

NEPA Compliance Officer

Attachment: 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: Ashton Hill Generator Replacement

Project Site Description

The project location is at the Ashton Hill communication site in eastern Idaho. Ashton Hill is located in Township 10 North, Range 43 East, Sec. 19 (Boise Meridian). The project is in the Targhee National Forest and is located approximately seven miles north of Ashton, Idaho, and 0.15 miles west of Highway 20. The site is in a forested mountain range at an elevation of 6,475 feet. There are approximately four towers at the site, along with associated equipment, including a lattice tower owned by BPA.

A review of the National Wetland Inventory, soil information, topography, and aerial photos did not reveal any wetlands or water bodies at the site.

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"/> |
| <p><u>Explanation:</u> On April 13, 2016, BPA initiated Section 106 consultation with Idaho SHPO, US Forest Service, Nez Perce, Shoshone Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation, and Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation. On June 21, 2016, Idaho SHPO concurred with BPA's findings that the proposed project would unlikely have any adverse effects to cultural or historical resources. To date, neither the US Forest Service, nor the notified tribes have responded with interest in commenting on the project.</p> <p>In the event of an inadvertent archaeological discovery, all construction work would cease, until the BPA archaeologist and other appropriate parties are notified, and suitable action is taken.</p> | | |
| 2. Geology and Soils | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <p><u>Explanation:</u> There would be minimal soil disturbance. All work is occurring in and around a previously disturbed radio tower communications site.</p> | | |
| 3. Plants (including federal/state special-status species) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <p><u>Explanation:</u> No special-status plant species or habitat present. The project area is graveled and devoid of vegetation. The staging area consists of low-growing forbs, such as <i>Achillea millefolium</i> (yarrow), <i>Anaphalis margaritacea</i> (pearly everlasting), <i>Fragaria</i> spp. (strawberry), and <i>Potentilla</i> spp.</p> | | |

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



Explanation: No special-status wildlife species or habitat present. The project area is developed with several communications towers and associated equipment buildings. The project would have no impacts to special-status species.

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



Explanation: The project area does not have any water bodies, floodplains or listed fish species. An unnamed, intermittent stream is located approximately 1,000 feet to the southwest. Best management practices (BMPs) would be used to avoid erosion of soils during construction activities.

6. **Wetlands**



Explanation: The project area does not contain any wetlands. A June 2016 site visit concluded that the site did not exhibit any wetland indicators (hydric soils, hydrology, or wetland vegetation).

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**



Explanation: The project would have minimal ground disturbance and not impact groundwater or aquifers.

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



Explanation: There will be no permanent changes to land use at this location. The proposed project is congruent with the existing land use at the site. Trenched areas would be returned to their present use.

9. **Visual Quality**



Explanation: The generator and other equipment replacement would not change the visual quality of the project location.

10. **Air Quality**



Explanation: There may be a small amount of dust and vehicle emissions during construction; however, there would be no significant changes to air quality during or after construction.

11. **Noise**



Explanation: Temporary construction noise during daylight hours. Operational noise would not change.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation: No impact.

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 has submitted to the US Forest Service (USFS) an application for Transportation and Utility Systems and Facilities on Federal Lands, Standard Form 299. Mark Bingman, with the USFS, was contacted and responded that this project would not require a decision memorandum from the district because the location is an existing communications site.

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

Signed: /s/ Beth Belanger

Date: July 15, 2016

Beth Belanger

Contract Environmental Protection Specialist

Motus Recruiting & Staffing