

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: AT&T Cedar Flats-Highway 8 LTE Antenna Upgrade

Project Manager: Jonathan Toobian – TELP-TPP-3

Location: Thurston County, Washington

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.19 Microwave, meteorological, and radio towers, B4.6 Additions and Modifications to Transmission Facilities.

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to allow AT&T to upgrade existing long-term evolution (LTE) antenna equipment on existing transmission equipment owned by BPA and leased to AT&T. The communications facility is located on tower 6/4 of BPA's 230-kV Olympia-Shelton No. 3 and 4 line, approximately 6 miles west of Olympia, WA. The existing antennas would be replaced due to technological advancements.

Specifically, a BPA-certified contractor would remove four existing antennas, two existing tower-mounted amplifiers (TMA's), and eight coaxial cables and install four new antennas, four new TMA's, two new combiners and eight new slightly larger coaxial cables. In addition, the replacement and/or addition of corresponding telecommunications equipment would occur within AT&T's fenced area underneath the transmission structure on BPA fee-owned property. AT&T would access the communications structure using a bucket truck and by climbing the structure. The project would not involve ground disturbance and would use established access roads and work areas.

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/ Douglas Corkran

Douglas Corkran

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Katey C. Grange January 4, 2022

Katey C. Grange

Date

NEPA Compliance Officer

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: AT&T Cedar Flats-Highway 8 LTE Antenna Upgrade

Project Site Description

The project site is located on BPA fee-owned property at BPA Salem Substation in Polk County, Oregon. It is located in Township 7 South, Range 3 West, Section 29. The communications facility is located on tower 6/4 of BPA's 230kV Olympia-Shelton No. 3 and 4 line, approximately 6 miles west of Olympia, WA. The project site is an existing steel lattice tower and a fenced communications structure located beneath the tower in a cleared ROW area west of Highway 8. The lattice steel tower is located at the end of an access road spur. The area is gently sloped, managed ROW vegetated with non-native grasses and shrubs. The surrounding area is comprised primarily of industrial forest lands.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground-disturbing work would occur. On July 31, 2020 BPA archeologists determined that this type of activity does not have the potential to cause effects to historic properties.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities would not require ground-disturbing activities.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All work in existing equipment area; no special-status species present or disturbed. Existing roadways and established work areas would be used.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are heavily forested areas surrounding the project site, but no occurrences of ESA or special-status species are documented nearby. The project site is next to a heavily traveled highway, so noise disturbance and activity levels in the vicinity are high. The work would create minor noise impacts, but these would not be substantially greater

than the existing ambient noise in the area from the highway. If any birds are found to be nesting on the transmission tower, construction of the project would be delayed until the birds have left the nest. No impacts to wildlife are expected.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities would not require in-water work or ground disturbance that would produce sediment that could enter nearby waterways.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities would not require ground disturbance that would produce sediment that could enter nearby wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No ground disturbance proposed.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There would be no change to land use at this location and it is not located in a specially-designated area.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The new antennas and equipment would generally be a like-for-like replacement of the existing antennas; therefore, they would be visually consistent with existing conditions.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The activities would generate a small amount of vehicle emissions and dust during construction.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some temporary minor construction noise would occur during daylight hours. The operational noise of the antennas would not change.

12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Workers would follow all standard safety protocols. Activities would not impact human health or 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: AT&T would notify underlying landowners as required.

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

Signed: /s/ Douglas Corkran January 4, 2022
Douglas Corkran, ECT-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist