

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Spar Canyon Substation Upgrade Project

Project No.: P02306

Project Manager: Charley Majors– TEPF-CSB-2

Location: Custer County, Idaho

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.11 Electrical power substations and interconnection facilities, B1.19 Microwave, meteorological, and radio towers

Description of the Proposed Action: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to upgrade substation and telecommunications equipment at Salmon River Electric Cooperative, Inc.'s Spar Canyon substation to modernize the substation and increase reliability. The upgrades, which would occur within the existing substation yard, would include a new control house with telecommunications and control equipment, station service, a telecommunications tower, seismic upgrade, and an improved road system.

The proposed new control house would require excavation of an approximately 30-ft by 40-ft area where a concrete stem-wall foundation would be installed. A pre-engineered metal building would be erected that would include a battery room, mechanical room, and cable entrance system. Finished floor to finished ceiling dimension would be a minimum of 10 ft. All necessary electrical, communications, control, and security equipment would be installed within the new control house and connected as needed to the existing control house via existing or new conduit and by expanding the existing cable trench.

Station service would be upgraded by installing a new station service voltage transformer (SSVT) and replacing the existing power utility source transformer with a larger unit. Both new transformers would feed into an automatic transfer switch (ATS), and new yard distribution panels would be installed. This would include an up to 10-ft by 10-ft slab on grade cement foundation for new SSVT, and drilled shaft footings approximately 1.5-ft in diameter and 5-ft deep for new yard panels. New yard lighting would also be included in the station service upgrades.

Communication upgrades would include UHF tower replacement with a three-legged freestanding telecommunications microwave tower, associated 15-ft by 15-ft pedestal footings, ice bridge, and safety cable climbing system.

Existing reactor seismic upgrades would include bolting baseplates into existing foundation and welding reactor to each plate. No excavation would be required for seismic upgrades.

Access roads within the existing substation would be graded and new rock would be spread and compacted. During construction, existing roads would be used for travel to and from the substation.

General equipment that may be utilized for this project includes: excavator, tractor-trailer, crane, transmission line bucket truck, transport dump trucks, dozer, grader, and vibratory roller compactor.

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/ Laura Roberts

Laura Roberts

Environmental Protection Specialist

Concur:

/s/ Sarah T. Biegel January 31, 2022

Sarah T. Biegel

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: Spar Canyon Substation Upgrade Project

Project Site Description

The proposed substation upgrade project occurs on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land in central Idaho (T11N, R21E, Section 7). The project area occurs in a high elevation shrub-scrub rangeland. No surface waters or wetlands occur within the general vicinity of the proposed project.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Although the proposed work results in ground disturbance, all of this work takes place within the existing Spar Canyon Substation fence. Substations have a significant amount of disturbance associated with their construction and can have disturbance upwards of 10 feet (3 meters) deep. Therefore, given the amount of previous disturbance it is extremely unlikely that any archaeological resources would be affected as a result of the proposed work. The BLM also concurred that the work within the substation would have no effect on archaeological resources. Additionally, the Spar Canyon Substation was constructed by Salmon River Electric Cooperative in 1983 and is therefore not considered a historic resource.

2. Geology and Soils

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities would not create substantial new impacts to geology or soil as existing yards were previously disturbed during yard construction. Spoils from excavations for installation/removal of equipment or spill cleanup would be disposed of according to all local, state, and Federal regulations.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There is no vegetation in the existing substation yard; therefore, the activities would not impact any vegetation, including Federal or state special-status species or habitats.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: In general, the project would have temporary noise and disturbance impacts to local wildlife related to elevated equipment noise and human presence, but any disturbed wildlife would

temporarily disperse to adjacent habitat during the temporary disturbance. There are no Federal/state special-status species or habitat present within the project area.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No water bodies occur in the general vicinity of the project. The project would have no impact to surface waters and there would be no effect to fish species, including Federal/state special-status fish species or habitats. Appropriate Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be utilized to keep sediment from entering waterways.

6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: As no wetlands occur within the vicinity of the project area, the proposed project would have no impact on wetlands.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed project occurs in high elevation shrub-scrub rangeland. No groundwater or aquifers would be impacted by the activities.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: No change in land use or specially-designated areas would occur as a result of the propose project.

The Spar Canyon Substation occurs on BLM land. BLM's Challis Office allows work within the bounds of the existing substation under the current authorization with BPA.

9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities would have minimal impacts to visual quality and the results would remain consistent with the existing surroundings of the electrical substation.

10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The proposed activities may generate a small amount of vehicle emissions and dust during construction. Existing facility emissions may slightly increase or decrease according to equipment installed or removed. These changes would not significantly alter the emission profile of BPA facilities.

11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Temporary construction noise would occur during daylight hours. No ongoing noise increase is expected for this area as a result of the proposed project.

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. All materials would be disposed of at approved facilities in compliance with local, state, and Federal regulations.

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: BPA Environment and Realty have coordinated with BLM Environmental and Realty.

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

Signed: /s/ Laura Roberts January 31, 2022
Laura Roberts, ECT-4 Date
Environmental Protection Specialist