

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Bonneville Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** Bettas Road Substation Land Disposal and Acquisition, Transmission Load Interconnection, and Installation of a New Access Road

**Project No.:** L0398 and LURR 20210106

**Project Manager:** Amy Gardner – TEP-TPP-1

**Location:** Kittitas County, Washington

**Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):** B1.24 Property transfers; B4.11 Electric power substations and interconnection facilities; B4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way

**Description of the Proposed Action:** Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) proposes to exchange property with Kittitas Public Utility District (KPUD) and allow KPUD to construct a new access road on BPA fee-owned property in response to KPUD's land use request. The land exchange and BPA fee-owned property use was requested by KPUD for the construction of a new substation in an area near BPA's Bettas Road Substation. BPA would also install new equipment in BPA's Bettas Road Substation and in the new KPUD substation in support of an interconnection request from KPUD.

Specifically, BPA proposes to dispose of 0.5 acre of fee-owned land located immediately east of BPA's Bettas Road Substation. In exchange, BPA would acquire 0.5 acre of fee-owned land from KPUD, which is located immediately to the north of BPA's Bettas Road Substation. A tax lot boundary adjustment would be performed. It is expected that KPUD would comply with all applicable laws and regulations for any future development on the 0.5 acre that they would acquire.

BPA also proposes to allow KPUD to perform the following access road-related actions on BPA fee-owned property located to the south of BPA's Bettas Road Substation:

- Improve about 600 linear feet of existing unpaved access road (a.k.a. BPA Service Road) so KPUD may safely gain access to their substation construction site with heavy equipment. Access road improvements would include blading, grading, and applying new rock aggregate.
- Construct about 200 linear feet of new access road (a.k.a. KPUD West Road) to be used as a primary entrance road to the new substation. About 150 feet of the new road would remain on BPA fee-owned property after the land swap, while the remaining 50 feet of new access road would be installed on newly acquired KPUD land after the land swap transaction is complete.
- Replace an existing 12-inch-diameter culvert with a 24-inch-diameter culvert on the BPA Service Road (near the Hayward Road intersection), and install a new 24-inch-culvert in KPUD new West Road (near the intersection of the BPA Service Road).

Within BPA's Bettas Road Substation yard, BPA proposes to install a Power Circuit Breaker (PCB), two disconnect switches to BPA's Bettas Road 230 kV ring bus, SCADA monitoring and control for the new PCB, a new 230 kV tap line, and a new dead-end structure to interconnect KPUD's new substation to BPA's Bettas Road Substation. BPA would also install new station service underground



# 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:** Bettas Road Substation Land Disposal and Acquisition, Transmission Load Interconnection, and Installation of a New Access Road (L0398/ LURR 20210106)

## **Project Site Description**

The project area is located at and near BPA's Bettas Road Substation in T19N R17E Section 15 of Kittitas County, Washington. The project area is located about 13 miles east of Cle Elum and 12 miles northwest of Ellensburg, Washington. A non-BPA substation, linked to a wind generation facility nearby, is located immediately west of BPA's Bettas Road Substation. The surrounding area is relatively unpopulated, as there are only a few residences within a 10-mile radius. Habitat in the area includes low growing shrubs and grasses on rolling hills and intermittent streams in the low-lying depressions between the hills. The nearest intermittent stream is located about 800 feet southwest of the project area, and the nearest wetland, a freshwater emergent wetland adjacent to Dry Creek, is over 3,200 feet east of the project area. The intermittent streams in the local area feed into Dry Creek, which is also about 3,200 feet east of the project area. Dry Creek flows into the Yakima River (and its associated floodplain) about 8 miles southeast of the project area. The Yakima River is designated freshwater critical habitat for Middle Columbia River steelhead.

## **Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources**

### **1. Historic and Cultural Resources**

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

**Explanation:** The BPA archaeologist initiated Section 106 consultation on July 22, 2021 with the Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation. On the same day, the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation requested a cultural resource survey be conducted of the Area of Potential Effect. On July 26, 2021, DAHP concurred with the proposed Area of Potential Effect.

On January 10, 2022, the BPA archaeologist determined that implementation of the proposed undertaking, would result in no adverse effect to historic properties and no adverse effect to historic transmission lines. On January 19, 2022, DAHP responded with a requirement that an archaeological monitor be present during construction activities. On February 11, 2022, the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation verbally confirmed (to the BPA archaeologist) their concurrence with DAHP's requirement.

#### **Notes:**

- Two cultural resource sites were recorded near the project area. To avoid potential impacts to these resources, the sites would be surrounded with flagging. Additionally, the sections of the access road near the two sites would receive Sensitive Area boundary line flagging to deter vehicles and equipment from leaving the roadway.
- An archaeological monitor must be present during ground-disturbing project activities near the two cultural resource sites.
- An Inadvertent Discovery Plan, with contact information for the BPA cultural resources lead, would be supplied to the construction contractor prior to commencing construction

work. Should cultural resources be discovered during project activities, then all project work in the area must stop, and the cultural resources lead must be notified immediately.

## **2. Geology and Soils**

Potential for Significance: No with Conditions

Explanation: Geology and soils within and around the BPA Bettas Road Substation were previously disturbed during construction of the existing substation, associated transmission lines and the BPA Service Road. Permanent soil impacts would occur where the ground surface would be compacted and covered by rock for KPUD's new West Road. It is assumed that any future development of the 0.5 acre transferred to KPUD would adhere to the local and state stormwater and erosion control requirements to limit soil erosion.

Notes:

- Standard construction best management practices would be implemented to prevent soil erosion and sedimentation, and disturbed areas would be reseeded after construction is complete.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no documented occurrences of any state-listed, special-status, or Federally-listed plant species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in the project area; therefore, the proposed project would not have an effect on state-listed, special-status, or Federally-listed ESA plant species. The construction of KPUD's new access road and potential future development of the 0.5 acres would primarily crush and remove native bunchgrass species and non-native grasses, but it may also impact low-growing sagebrush and rabbit brush, lupine, cushion buckwheat, yarrow, and hairy cat's ear. The vegetation disturbance would be limited to the project area and is of similar vegetation types in adjacent areas.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There are no documented occurrences of any state-listed, special-status, or Federally-listed wildlife species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in the project area; therefore, the proposed project would not have an effect on state-listed, special-status, or Federally-listed ESA wildlife species. Wildlife may temporarily relocate during project activities, but would likely return to the remote project area after the project is complete.

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

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area does not contain any water bodies, floodplains, or surface connectivity to fish streams. Therefore, the project would not impact water bodies, floodplains, or fish.

## 6. Wetlands

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area does not contain any wetlands. Therefore, the project would not impact wetlands.

## 7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Spill prevention measures would be implemented during project activities associated with the transmission interconnection project and KPUD's new access road installation. The project activities would not provide a pathway for groundwater contamination.

## 8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project area is not located in a specially-designated area, and no land use changes are proposed. While there would be a tax lot boundary adjustment performed through the county, the land use for both parcels of land would not change, as the lands would be used to support of transmission infrastructure.

## 9. Visual Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: The project activities would not substantially change the visual quality of area, as they would be consistent with the transmission substation and line facilities in the project area.

## 10. Air Quality

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: There may be a small amount of temporary dust and vehicle emissions during project activities associated with the transmission interconnection project, KPUD's new access road installation and any future development on the 0.5 acre transferred; however, there would be no substantial changes to air quality after construction is complete.

## 11. Noise

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: Some temporary construction noise would occur during intermittent periods of time during daylight hours. After project completion, the operational noise at the BPA Bettas Road Substation would not change. The project would not substantially change the noise quality of the area, beyond temporary construction-related noise impacts.

## 12. Human Health and Safety

Potential for Significance: No

Explanation: All standard safety protocols would be followed during project activities; therefore, project 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: BPA would continue to coordinate with Kittitas County Community Development Services (for the tax lot boundary adjustment) and Kittitas Public Utility District.

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

Signed: /s /Becky Hill

Becky Hill  
Contract Environmental Protection Specialist  
Flux Resources, LLC

February 17, 2022

Date