
INTERNET FOR ALL

Finding of No Significant Impact

*Colville Confederated Tribe NTIA 2.5 GHz
Wireless, Middle Mile Fiber to the Home
Project (NT22TBC0290057)*



Lead Federal Agency

U.S. Department of Commerce:

National Telecommunications and Information Administration

Cooperating Agencies

U.S. Department of Interior:

Bureau of Indian Affairs-Northwest Region

Bureau of Reclamation-Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region

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National Telecommunications and Information Administration

Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program

Colville Confederated Tribes NTIA 2.5 GHz Wireless, Middle Mile Fiber to the Home Project

Overview

This document serves as the Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the following Proposed Action (also referred to as “Project”) awarded by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). The NTIA and cooperating agencies, including the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Northwest Region and the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) Columbia-Pacific Northwest Region, have completed the sufficiency review of the recipient’s Environmental Assessment (EA) and determined that the Project will not have a significant impact on the environment. The FONSI contains information related to the review.

Recipient Name:	The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
Grant Project Name:	Colville Confederated Tribes NTIA 2.5 GHz Wireless, Middle Mile Fiber to the Home Project
Grant Award No.	NT22TBC020057 Award/Sub-Recipient Award No.
Program Location:	Ferry, Okanogan, and Grant County, Washington

Program Summary

The NTIA awarded a grant to The Colville Confederated Tribes (CCT), through the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program (TBCP), as authorized by the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Division N, Title IX, Section 905(c), Public Law 116-260, 134 Stat. 1182 (Dec. 27, 2020) (Act). TBCP provides new federal funding for grants to eligible entities to expand access to and adoption of: (i) broadband service on Tribal Land; or (ii) for programs that promote the use of broadband to access remote learning, telework, or telehealth resources during the COVID-19 pandemic. The CCT Project is called the *Colville Confederated Tribes NTIA 2.5 Gigahertz (GHz) Wireless, Middle Mile Fiber to the Home Project* and the proposed activities are scheduled to occur primarily on the Colville Reservation in northeastern Washington State. Three segments of the Project extend off-reservation into Ferry, Okanogan, and Grant Counties, Washington, and onto Bureau of Reclamation property.

The CCT prepared a Draft EA for this Project in May 2024 under the supervision of NTIA. NTIA issued the Draft EA for public comment on July 2, 2024. After the Draft EA public comment period closed on August 1, 2024, Reclamation identified that Project deployment would require an alternative routing across a portion of federal land under Reclamation jurisdiction not identified in the Draft or Final EA. This FONSI identifies and discusses this alternative routing. NTIA, BIA, and Reclamation have determined that the Final EA meets the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the NEPA regulations and are adopting the Final EA with the issuance of this FONSI.

The Project includes the following:

- 171.8 miles of new fiber network, 1 mile of new aerial electrical distribution, 2.5 miles of new buried electrical distribution, three new 195-foot monopoles with wireless hardware, four new 100-foot ductile iron poles, fifteen new 50-foot ductile iron poles, 31 new 40-foot ductile iron poles, temporary power/fiber delivery to an existing cell-on-wheels (COW) site, and a hardware upgrade at an existing 195-foot tower site.
- Construction work for the proposed aerial installation will utilize existing electrical distribution poles primarily at the edge of public roads rights-of-way (ROW) and will be installed using a boom truck where vehicle access is within 40 feet.
- Underground installation will occur in previously disturbed ground near the paved roadway shoulder to the extent possible. Cable will be installed using a combination of techniques: plow, trench, or directional bore.
- The three 195-foot monopoles (Kewa Mountain Site, Inchelium Hill Site and Disautel Mountain Site) will be installed using direct embedment, which means that no foundation is needed. Wireless broadband transmitters will be affixed to the monopoles. Fiber will be directly routed to the Kewa Mountain Monopole Site and Inchelium Hill Monopole Site. The Disautel Mountain Monopole Site will relay Internet from a microwave connection set on one new 40-foot pole on the north side of SR155.
- The three 100-foot ductile iron poles are proposed along the edge of SR21. One new 100-foot ductile iron pole is proposed at the existing COW site. Fiber and electricity will be directly routed to the poles along SR21.
- The fifteen 50-foot ductile iron poles will be installed along the edge of SR21 and Inchelium-Kettle Falls Road. Electricity will be directly routed to the poles from nearby infrastructure.
- 30 new poles are needed to provide electricity to the Disautel Mountain Monopole site, and one new pole is needed to provide a microwave connection between existing buried cable infrastructure and the monopole. Access to the pole site will be via existing roads managed by the BIA except where approximately one mile of new road construction is necessary.
- Proposed off-reservation development of Reclamation land in work area Okanogan South (O-S) is in the vicinity of the Towns of Coulee Dam, Koontzville, and the City of Grand Coulee. The proposed Reclamation land development includes approximately 2.1 miles of new buried fiber along SR 155.¹ Proposed development in the City of Grand Coulee includes approximately 0.7 miles of aerial cable and an aerial crossing over Reclamation's Banks Lake diversion structure.
- Development on Reclamation land for work area Ferry West (F-W) in Ferry County is limited to one new 50-foot pole on the west side of SR21 near the Sanpoil River Arm.
- Construction of one new pole off the CCT Reservation on Reclamation land along Inchelium-Kettle Falls Road in work area Ferry East (F-E). Development on Reclamation land in work area F-E also includes 3.65 miles of new fiber (0.21 miles aerial fiber, 3.43 miles buried fiber).
- Long-term operation includes periodic vegetation maintenance along the aerial route and surrounding the monopole sites to prevent interference with overhead lines and access.

¹ The proposed route across Reclamation land along SR 155 is being re-evaluated. For further details, see subsection "Alternative Fiber Routing Across Reclamation Land" in this FONSI.

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- Vegetation maintenance along the aerial section is an existing standard operating procedure undertaken by the local utilities that own the poles. New long-term operation or maintenance activities will occur in the vicinity of the monopole sites only. Ongoing activities include minimal vegetation clearing and road surface maintenance.

Based on a review of the analysis in the EA, the NTIA, BIA, and Reclamation have determined that the Project, implemented in accordance with the preferred alternative, and incorporating best management practices (BMPs) and protective measures identified in the EA, will not result in any significant environmental impacts. Therefore, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required. The basis for this determination is described in this FONSI.

Additional information and copies of the Executive Summary of the EA and FONSI are available to all interested persons and the public through the NTIA website (<https://broadbandusa.ntia.doc.gov/funding-programs/documentation-and-reporting>) and the following contact:

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Project Purpose and Need

The purpose of this Project is to provide a network of reliable high-speed broadband Internet service throughout the Colville Reservation. The Project is needed to address the lack of modern broadband infrastructure on tribal land and extends backbone, middle mile, and last mile service to businesses, institutions, and residents located on tribal land.

Native American tribes and their reservations are consistently underserved communities with regard to access to fiber and broadband communications infrastructure, which was previously considered a luxury, but is now a basic utility for households and businesses. While improvements to communications technologies continue to evolve and improve, tribal communities are often located in rural areas that are geographically isolated with low population density, resulting in a lack of the necessary investment in communications infrastructure. Further, the use of alternative means of such communication (such as satellite Internet access) are prohibitively expensive for members of these communities. The lack of investment in such infrastructure results in disparities in education, economic opportunities, health, and overall quality of life for current and future members of these communities. The Broadband Connectivity Grant from the NTIA provides needed access to funding for tribal communities to help reduce such disparities.

Project Description

The CCT Project was awarded with funds under the TBCP Grant of the NTIA for the construction and modification of both aerial and buried fiber and three (3) wireless facilities located throughout Ferry, Okanogan, and Grant Counties in Washington state. The proposed fiber extension consists of 171.8 miles of new fiber network, one mile of new aerial electrical distribution, 2.5 miles of new buried electrical distribution, three new 195-foot monopoles with wireless hardware, four new 100-foot ductile iron poles, fifteen new 50-foot ductile iron poles, 31 new 40-foot ductile iron poles, temporary power/fiber delivery to an existing cell-on-wheels (COW) site, and a hardware upgrade at an existing 195-foot tower site. The completed Project will extend high-speed broadband Internet to 2,515 customers across the CCT.

Analysis of Alternatives

The CCT EA includes an analysis of the alternatives for implementing the Project to meet the purpose and need. The NTIA, BIA, and Reclamation conducted a review of the recipient's analysis of alternatives for implementing the Project to meet the purpose and need, including a review of the "no action" alternative, where applicable. Each alternative was evaluated for impacts against the "no action" alternative and impacts from other alternatives, as a component of selecting the preferred alternative. The following summarizes the alternatives analyzed in the EA.

Preferred Alternative:

The Project includes 171.8 miles of new fiber cable, one mile of new aerial electrical distribution, 2.5 miles of buried electrical distribution, three new 195-foot monopoles, 3.4 miles of new road development to provide access to the 195-foot pole sites, 50 new poles, temporary connection to an existing COW site, and a hardware upgrade at an existing 195-foot tower site.

Construction work for the proposed aerial installation will utilize existing electrical distribution poles primarily at the edge of the ROW of public roads and will be installed using a boom truck

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where vehicle access is within 40 feet. If vehicle access is greater than 40 feet from the pole, a lineman will climb the pole to perform installation by hand. Cable installation is accomplished with a moving work zone and can be placed in up to 3-mile lengths without a splice point. Worker safety includes signs, traffic control structures, and high visibility clothing. Equipment used for aerial installation includes a boom lift truck, line truck, support truck, trailer, and reel loader truck.

Underground installation will occur in previously disturbed ground near the paved roadway shoulder to the extent possible. The nominal depth of buried cable is 24 inches below the ground surface (bgs) and is contained in polyethylene conduit. In general, all conduits will be located less than 48 inches bgs, except where boring under private driveways, culverts, and other obstructions necessitates greater cable depth. Cable burial depth will be based on state and local standards where boring is necessary. Cable will be installed using a combination of techniques: plow, trench, or directional bore. Plowing is the preferred method where existing aerial infrastructure is absent because it is the least invasive construction technique. Trenching will be implemented where soil and terrain conditions do not support plowing. Directional bores will only be used as necessary to avoid disturbing concrete/asphalt at private driveway crossings, and to avoid future conflicts at culvert crossings that may eventually require maintenance or repair.

Where buried fiber must cross an existing bridge or bottomless culvert, conduit will be girdled to the side of the structure. The trench and buried conduit path will terminate at a vault located approximately 10 feet from the bridge approach on either side. Between the two vaults, conduit rated for exterior application will be routed along the side of the bridge (below the railing). The conduit will be affixed to the bridge using masonry anchors and pipe clamp brackets. Overwater construction will be completed from the bridge deck; no in-water work will be necessary. Equipment use for buried installation includes a tracked plow cat, tracked pull cat, tracked clean-up cat, backhoe, directional boring machine, trencher, cable reel truck and trailer, vibratory plow, tractor trailer transport semi, three-quarter and one-ton trucks, water truck, dump truck, rock saw, and air compressor.

Three 195-foot monopoles are proposed for installation at Disautel Mountain, Inchelium Hill, and Kewa Mountain. Each pole structure consists of two separate wood laminated sections. The structures will be installed using direct embedment, which means that no foundation is needed. A track hoe will excavate a hole that is 8 feet by 8 feet, and 12 feet deep. The first section of pole will be set in the hole, backfilled, and tamped in place. The second section will be attached by a crane and secured in the middle utilizing an engineered steel collar. Radio equipment and ladder access is installed after connecting the two sections.

Ground disturbance is necessary to improve existing access or create new access, for a proposed 100-foot by 100-foot development footprint surrounding the monopole, and to provide electricity and/or fiber connections. Land clearing supporting long-term site maintenance will occur only within the 100-foot by 100-foot development footprint and along the access roads.

Vehicular access to the Disautel Mountain Monopole Site requires widening a 1/3 mile section of existing road from approximately 8 feet to 12 feet (7,040 square feet new road surface), and creation of 1 mile of new road at 12 feet width (63,360 square feet of new road surface). Road construction includes grading native soil to a crown, then capping the surface with 8 inches of 3-inch-minus crushed rock.

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Vehicular access to the Kewa Mountain Monopole Site requires creation of 0.75 miles of new road. The crushed gravel driving surface will be 12 feet in width (47,520 square feet of new road surface).

Vehicular access to the Inchelium Hill Monopole Site requires widening a 0.4-mile section of existing road from approximately 8 feet to 12 feet (8,448 square feet new road surface), and creation of 0.75 miles of new road. The crushed gravel driving surface will be 12 feet in width (47,520 square feet of new road surface).

Electrical distribution service to the Disautel Mountain Monopole Site will be aerial on 30 new 40-foot ductile iron poles set between SR155 and the monopole site. These poles will be set and wired using tracked vehicles. Electrical distribution service to the Kewa Mountain Monopole Site and Inchelium Hill Monopole Site will be buried along the edge of the widened/new road sections.

Wireless broadband transmitters will be affixed to the monopoles. Fiber will be directly routed to the Kewa Mountain Monopole Site and Inchelium Hill Monopole Site. The Disautel Mountain Monopole Site will relay Internet from a microwave connection set on one new 40-foot pole on the north side of SR155.

Three 100-foot ductile iron poles are proposed along the edge of SR21. One new 100-foot ductile iron pole is proposed at the existing COW site. These poles will provide wireless Internet connection to area residents. The poles along SR21 will be installed near the back edge of the ROW using a pole truck. Poles will be staged at a laydown yard until needed. Fiber and electricity will be directly routed to the poles along SR21. Fiber will be buried at the edge of the existing access road to the COW site, and electricity will be aerial lines from an existing distribution pole located 278 feet east of the proposed pole.

Fifteen 50-foot ductile iron poles will be installed along the edge of SR21 and Inchelium-Kettle Falls Road. These poles will provide wireless Internet connection to area residents. The poles will be set near the edge of the right-of-way using a pole truck. Electricity will be directly routed to the poles from nearby infrastructure. Equipment used for wireless facilities installation includes a crane, three-quarter and one-ton trucks, mini excavator, pole truck, and concrete truck.

Long-term operation includes periodic vegetation maintenance along the aerial route and surrounding the monopole sites to prevent interference with overhead lines and access. Vegetation maintenance along the aerial section is an existing standard operating procedure undertaken by the local utilities that own the poles. New long-term operation or maintenance activities will occur in the vicinity of the monopole sites only. Ongoing activities include minimal vegetation clearing and road surface maintenance.

The description of the physical route of the Project is described below. Site maps are also provided in Appendix A of the EA.

- The Project begins along the edge of SR97 near the town of Okanogan. At approximately the city of Omak, the route heads east on SR155 towards Nespelem. Existing cable infrastructure splits approximately 12 miles south of Nespelem, heading south to Grand Coulee on SR155 and east on Peter Dan Road/Manilla Creek Road towards SR21. The COW site connection is near the intersection of Manilla Creek Road and SR21. The route connects the town of Keller and continues north along SR21 to the town of Republic. A separate loop will provide service between Kewa and SR20 along Silver Creek Road and Inchelium-Kettle Falls Road.

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- New 195-foot monopoles will be installed on Disautel Mountain, Kewa Mountain, and Inchelium Hill. The Disautel Mountain Monopole Site is between Omak and Nespelem and north of SR155. The Kewa Mountain Monopole Site is in the southeastern portion of the reservation near the intersection of Kewa Meteor Road and Kewa Cemetery Road. The Inchelium Hill Monopole Site is in the eastern portion of the reservation near the intersection of Bridge Creek Road and Silver Creek Road.

Alternative Fiber Routing Across Reclamation Land

After the Draft EA public comment period closed on August 1, 2024, Reclamation determined that a small portion of the Project crossing Reclamation land at Grand Coulee Dam was no longer viable due to constrained utility spacing.

Specifically, the initial engineered and designed path to tie in the Colville Tribes fiber optic network to the Internet service point of presence at the NoaNet regeneration hut, located just off of SR174 on the north side of the Town of Coulee Dam, was planned to begin at an existing vault located near 118 Lincoln Avenue in the Town of Coulee Dam and then continue south on Lincoln in a newly installed conduit to SR155. The new conduit would be installed using methods including open trenching, plowing, and directional boring. The new conduit and fiber would be placed within the existing highway prism running south through the Grand Coulee Dam and the John W. Keys III Pump Generating Plant areas, eventually reaching the City of Grand Coulee, and would then proceed on existing Grant County PUD utility poles north to the NoaNet regeneration hut located approximately 400 feet north of H Street on SR174.

As part of the Reclamation ROW permitting process, CCT's contractor, NoaNet, submitted professionally engineered and certified designs to Reclamation real property staff for review and feedback. After the Draft EA public comment period closed, Reclamation real property staff notified CCT and NoaNet that a section of the proposed route required penetrating solid rock in one area and risked impacting critical dam underground utilities in another area.

Reclamation engineers, CCT representatives, and NoaNet team members agreed to explore an alternative route through adjacent Reclamation property to avoid these potential barriers, obstacles, and concerns and significantly shorten the overall length of the segment connecting the CCT and NoaNet networks. This potential alternative route would begin in the same vault location in the Town of Coulee Dam, plow new conduit and fiber directly west through vacant Reclamation land, then attach to two to three new telecom utility poles to avoid a solid rock outcropping, and terminate on the shoulder of SR174. The new conduit and fiber would then be placed in the existing highway road prism running south to the NoaNet regeneration hut.

At NTIA, BIA, and Reclamation direction, CCT and NoaNet will complete further Project design and review the potential for environmental and cultural resource impacts from this alternative fiber routing. NTIA will review and evaluate CCT and NoaNet's assessment of the potential alternative fiber routing and subsequent NEPA analysis will be prepared as necessary before approving Project construction associated with the alternative fiber route.

No Action Alternative:

Under the No Action Alternative, the Project would not be constructed. This alternative would leave residents, businesses, and government with limited access to the Internet. This alternative

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would forgo the social, economic, and health benefits of providing a more complete network and faster speeds of cable Internet to the CCT and would hinder future economic development in the area. The No Action Alternative would not result in any ground-disturbing work, including development of new monopole sites. This alternative would have a negative impact on the Tribal community, as the current limited Internet access will not provide for educational, telehealth and business opportunities.

Alternatives Considered but Not Carried Forward:

The planning phase took into consideration the obstacles present along the route and made numerous decisions about the appropriate delivery method for each obstacle encountered; many combinations of deployment methods were considered as alternatives. Constructability and cost were the driving factors, and no other mix of aerial/buried/wireless delivery would reasonably meet Project goals. Aerial cable is the preferred method of delivery where existing infrastructure is present due to cost. The first alternative that was considered included full utilization of existing aerial infrastructure and buried installation where aerial infrastructure is not present. This alternative was eliminated because of the cost and complexity of connecting customers along the more rural sections of SR155, SR21, and the Inchelium-Kettle Falls Road.

The full aerial/buried alternative would require an additional aerial crossing over the Sanpoil River and high construction costs due to terrain, ground conditions, and proximity to necessary utilities. For these reasons, wireless infrastructure is proposed to meet customer needs along SR155, SR21, and Inchelium-Kettle Falls Road.

Findings and Conclusions

The recipient's EA analyzed existing conditions and environmental consequences of the preferred alternative and the No Action alternative for potential impacts in the major resource areas of Noise, Air Quality (including greenhouse gases [GHGs]), Geology and Soils, Water Resources, Biological Resources, Historic and Cultural Resources, Aesthetic and Visual Resources, Land Use, Infrastructure, Socioeconomic Resources, and Human Health and Safety. The results of the analysis are summarized in the table below:

Resource Area	Preferred Alternative	No Action Alternative
Noise	No Significant Impact	No Impact
Air Quality (including greenhouse gases [GHGs])	No Significant Impact	No Impact
Geology and Soils	No significant Impact	No Impact
Water Resources	No significant Impact	No Impact
Biological Resources	No significant Impact	No Impact
Historic and Cultural Resources	No significant Impact	No Impact
Aesthetic and Visual Resources	No significant Impact	No Impact
Land Use	No significant Impact	No Impact



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Infrastructure	No significant Impact	No Impact
Socioeconomic Resources	Positive Impact	Negative Impact
Human Health and Safety	Positive Impact	Negative Impact

The sections that follow provide a brief narrative for those resource areas in the table above and provide a summary of the results of required consultation with the appropriate agency or agencies.

Noise

Noise impacts related to construction are temporary and minor. Short-term construction noise impacts will be mitigated by ensuring that workers follow Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards for hearing protection, limiting hours of construction to normal business hours, and avoiding work on the weekends. Long-term noise impacts are limited to minor maintenance and repair activities only. Based on these considerations, no significant impacts on noise are expected to occur as a result of implementation.

Air Quality

The Proposed Action would result in negligible and temporary increase in air emissions at and near the Proposed Action sites during construction and installation activities as a result of equipment operation and ground-disturbing activities. Both equipment operation and ground-disturbing activities would be temporary and long-term air quality impacts are limited to future maintenance and repair activities. In order to minimize the generation of airborne particulate (dust) emissions as a result of ground disturbance, BMPs (e.g., wetting and stabilizing exposed soils, minimizing exposed soils, and minimizing traffic across unpaved areas) would be implemented. Further, development activities would be subject to both state and local air quality regulations which have been developed to address current air quality non-attainment and in accordance with all applicable regulations. No generators are proposed as part of this Project; therefore emissions will only be from construction and maintenance vehicles and will be temporary and negligible. Climate impacts resulting from new active Internet users, materials, and equipment are insignificant.

Geology and Soils

The project will result in temporary ground disturbance primarily within 24-48 inches of the soil surface, with some deeper bore holes. All temporarily disturbed areas, including the areas between Coulee Dam and Grand Coulee, will be immediately restored, except where new road development and the monopole footprint are proposed. New road development and monopole construction will permanently alter a small physical area within a large patch of undisturbed land. The Proposed Action will not result in significant impacts to geology or soils.

Water Resources

The Proposed Action will cross streams with aerial and buried cable and requires one road crossing to provide access to the Disautel Mountain Monopole Site which will be performed

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during the dry season to minimize impacts. Aerial cable installation and girdling conduit to the edge of existing structures will avoid impact to surface waters.

Based on physical investigation, all buried cable installation can be completed without directly impacting wetlands due to their absence from the proposed work areas, i.e., at the edge of the ROW.

Aerial cable installation is proposed in mapped and observed wetlands associated with the Sanpoil River north of the Colville Reservation. Aerial hanging where existing poles are greater than ~40 feet from the edge of the road surface (horizontal limit for boom truck arm) will be completed by hand to avoid impacts to wetlands. No significant temporary impacts to wetlands are anticipated. No wetlands were observed in proximity to the proposed monopole sites or along their access roads.

This Project will not divert or otherwise alter existing groundwater resources, no change in floodplain elevations or flood storage volume will occur, and the Project will not impact coastal zones, estuaries, or inter-tidal zones due to their absence from the PA.

Further, impacts will be minimized by following erosion control BMPs, as determined appropriate by the Certified Erosion and Sediment Control (CESC) professional, that will be on site during construction.

Biological Resources

Official species lists generated from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) system, were reviewed for species that may be present at the Proposed Action sites. A Biological Assessment (BA) was submitted to the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The BA made determinations of “May Affect, Not Likely to Adversely Affect” for the two threatened and endangered fish species: upper Columbia River steelhead and bull trout. The BA also determined that the project will not “Jeopardize the Continued Existence” of an Experimental Population of upper Columbia River spring Chinook salmon. NMFS concurrence with the steelhead and Chinook salmon determinations was received on May 31, 2024. USFWS concurrence on “May Affect Not Likely to Adversely Affect the Bull Trout was received on August 13, 2024. The BA supported a determination of “No Effect” for the Canada Lynx, North American Wolverine, yellow-billed Cuckoo, Monarch butterfly, and Spalding’s catchfly. Additionally, the proposed monopoles will comply with the Federal Aviation Association (FAA) regulations (FAA 2017) which require flashing lights to reduce the number of migratory bird collisions.

Historical and Cultural Resources

The project area sits within the traditional territory of the Nespelem and Sanpoil. The CCT have not identified any sacred sites within the immediate vicinity of the proposed project area. A number of locations with traditional Indian place names and traditional cultural value are present in the vicinity of the project area, but the Tribes have not specifically identified any surrounding Traditional Cultural Properties (TCPs) and archeological sites as having established religious significance or ceremonial use. Furthermore, based on personal communication with the CCT Tribal Historic Properties Officer (THPO) and CCT consulting staff, no Sacred Sites were identified on Federal land in the direct APE or within the viewshed of the 195-foot pole locations.

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No Indian trust lands were identified on Reclamation lands in the proposed action area or staging areas during the scoping process, such as those held in trust by the BIA for the benefit of Tribes or individual Indian trust landowners.

The CCT THPO and Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) were provided with both a desktop study and a field study that identified three resources that could potentially be impacted by the Project. The desktop study utilized a defined Area of Potential Effect (APE) of a 100-foot buffer around the planned route of the Project (both aerial and buried), and a 0.5-mile buffer around each monopole site and the COW site to account for visual impacts.

The NTIA and CCT were the reviewing agencies for all on-reservation work. DAHP was also consulted for the small portions of off-reservation work. For on-reservation work, no other tribes were consulted. For off-reservation work, the NTIA notified DAHP and the following Tribes via the Tower Construction Notification System (TCNS): Blackfeet Nation, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation. The Eastern Shoshone Tribe requested more information, which was then provided. The Blackfeet Nation responded that they have no interest in the Project, and no other responses have been received to date.

During the desktop study and fieldwork, three locations were identified where archaeological resources may be potentially impacted by planned fiber installation. It is recommended that the route be redesigned to avoid these areas. There are five other sites near archaeological points of interest where monitoring is recommended, and an inadvertent discovery plan has been drafted and will be available on-site during all Project-related ground disturbance.

The Washington State DAHP concurred with a Section 106 no adverse effect to historic properties determination on April 23, 2024, and the Colville THPO concurred with a Section 106 'no adverse effect to historic properties' determination on June 26, 2024. Documentation of THPO and SHPO consultation and concurrence is included in Appendix B of the EA. It is not anticipated that there will be negative impacts to historical or cultural resources as a result of the Proposed Action.

Aesthetic Visual Resources

The Proposed Action would include the installation of three 195-foot monopoles to the skyline, three 100-foot poles along SR21, one 100-foot pole near Manilla Creek Road and SR21 (COW site), fifteen 50-foot poles, and both aerial and buried fiber.

The Project occurs primarily in rural areas along state highways and land use is residential or commercial near population centers, and rural pasture/agriculture outside of population centers. Impacts to any aesthetic or visual resources would be minimal since there are several existing towers on the skyline. Lashing cable to existing electrical distribution infrastructure, burying cable along the edge of the road, and installing conduit on existing bridges will create no long-term significant aesthetic or visual resource impacts.

Land Use

The Proposed Action would result in insignificant and minor impacts to the land use in the Project area apart from the monopole sites and their access path from forestry or agricultural land. In the three small footprints of the monopole sites, the Disautel Mountain Monopole Site

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and the Inchelium Hill Monopole Site are used for grazing and fallow pasture which can still take place post-construction. The Kewa Mountain Monopole Site is primarily forested and will remain in that land use post-construction. No significant impacts are expected from the new monopole footprint and access road.

No direct or significant impacts to land use are anticipated along most of the buried and aerial cable route since work occurs in road ROW using existing infrastructure or is buried and restored immediately.

The project serves residential, commercial, and governmental land uses in the cities of Okanogan, Omak, Nespelem, Elmer City, Coulee Dam, Keller, and Inchelium. The project serves rural residential uses and some commercial uses outside of population centers. The project occurs primarily in the state highway ROWs, public roads, and residential properties.

Within CCT land, zoning and land use decisions are controlled by the tribal government and regulated under Chapter 4-3 of the *Colville Tribal Law and Order Code*, except where work occurs within the ROW of SR21 and SR155. The project occurs within and adjacent to Residential, Commercial, Rural/Agricultural, Forest, and Wilderness zoning designations. Permits for work occurring within the reservation will be issued by the Colville Land Use and Development Department.

A portion of the proposed fiber route is within the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) ROW along SR97, SR21, and SR155. For this reason, the project requires a franchise agreement between WSDOT and the CCT. State approval includes internal environmental review, which will be processed by WSDOT as a Categorical Exclusion for this project.

A portion of the proposed fiber and monopole/pole sites occur on land that is managed by the BIA, Reclamation, and Colville National Forest (USFS).

- The project creates a federal nexus with Reclamation due to proposed development on Reclamation land in and near the City of Grand Coulee, Town of Coulee Dam, Keller, and Inchelium. Within Reclamation lands, facilities, and waterbodies, possession or occupancy are regulated under 43 CFR Part 429. The CCT submitted an SF-299 application to Reclamation in April 2024. Reclamation determined it will issue the CCT a 25-Year License, a use authorization pursuant to said regulations. No ground-disturbing activities shall occur on federal lands managed by Reclamation until this license has been executed by all necessary parties.
- The project creates a federal nexus with the BIA where development occurs in the ROW of BIA roads and at Tribal Allotment crossings throughout the project area. The BIA will issue use authorizations for all work on BIA-managed land.
- The project creates a federal nexus with the USFS where the project passes through the Colville National Forest along SR21. USFS will meet NEPA compliance with an internally drafted Categorical Exclusion and will issue a special use permit for work within the Colville National Forest.

Infrastructure

Construction may create temporary access disruptions as the work zone crosses residences and businesses. The proposed project will create new infrastructure on CCT land. The long-term impact is increased broadband Internet speed for CCT residents and businesses. No long-term impacts to transportation, electrical distribution, water supply, sewer, solid waste

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disposal, or other telecommunication forms are anticipated. Temporary lane width reductions may also increase traffic congestion during construction. This project will improve infrastructure on CCT land by providing a more complete network of high-speed Internet without negatively impacting existing infrastructure.

Socioeconomic Resources

The enhanced capabilities and reliability of voice and data communications resulting from the Proposed Action would provide additional economic and educational opportunities and access to previously inaccessible telehealth care services for the CCT and surrounding communities. This would not only provide a more equitable distribution of these vital services but also increase the sense of security and wellbeing among these communities. This project will indirectly promote residential population growth in the region because many people would not consider re-locating to a community that does not have Internet connectivity. The Proposed Action would provide positive impacts to the Tribal Community.

Health and Human Safety

The Proposed Action would not require the handling or use of any hazardous materials. During construction, Occupational Safety and Health Administration safety standards would be enforced for contractors and their employees. To further protect workers from exposure to potentially contaminated soils, BMPs (e.g. personal protective equipment including masks, respirators, gloves, and hand washing stations) will be implemented. To further protect area residents and the general public from exposure, the CCT Environmental Trust Department has been made aware of the locations of all known hazardous waste sites near the project area. The Proposed Action would result in increased broadband connectivity that will improve communications and access to healthcare services for the CCT and surrounding community members.

Cumulative Impacts

The Proposed Action is comprised of 171.8 miles of new fiber network, one mile of new aerial electrical distribution, 2.5 miles of new buried electrical distribution, three new 195-foot monopoles with wireless hardware, four new 100-foot ductile iron poles, fifteen new 50-foot ductile iron poles, 31 new 40-foot ductile iron poles, temporary power/fiber delivery to an existing cell-on-wheels (COW) site, and a hardware upgrade at an existing 195-foot tower site. The completed Project will extend high-speed broadband Internet to 2,515 customers across the CCT.

Any impacts to the environment from the Proposed Action and associated actions, when combined with other past, present, or potential future actions, would be minimal. Further, the minimal negative impacts to the environment from the Proposed Action and associated actions, would be greatly outweighed by the benefit to quality of life for the populations surrounding the proposed Project areas. In summary, there are therefore no foreseeable cumulative effects that would result from the Proposed Action.

Best Management Practices and Mitigation Measures

1. **Noise:** Short-term construction noise impacts will be mitigated by ensuring that workers follow Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards for hearing protection, limiting hours of construction to normal business hours, and avoiding work on the weekends. Noise impacts will be further mitigated by contractor utilization of machinery that is equipped with modern muffler technology. Long-term noise impacts are limited to minor maintenance and repair activities only.
2. **Air Quality and Climate:** Short-term construction impacts will be mitigated by following best management practices established in the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP), including dust suppression and minimizing equipment idling.
3. **Geology and Soils:** All temporarily disturbed areas, including the areas between Coulee Dam and Grand Coulee, will be immediately restored, except where new road development and the monopole footprint are proposed.
4. **Water Resources:** The project will result in temporary ground disturbance within 24-48 inches of the soil surface, with some deeper bore holes. All temporarily disturbed areas in or near water resources will be immediately restored. Minor impacts from mobilized sediment during construction will be minimized by implementation of appropriate erosion control BMPs.
5. **Biological Resources:** The project will result in minor temporary and permanent vegetation removal. Temporarily disturbed areas will be immediately restored. Proposed access road development and monopole pad construction will permanently alter a small physical area within a large patch of undisturbed, sparsely vegetated land. No special habitat features or high-quality habitats will be impacted. Construction noise that may affect birds and terrestrial wildlife is discountable. **Threatened/Endangered Species:** Three Threatened or Endangered species of fish are potentially present in the project area: bull trout, Chinook, and steelhead. These species will not be impacted by aerial fiber installation because this work will not alter streams. These species will not be impacted by buried fiber installation because fiber will be girdled to the side of existing bridges or bored beneath existing culverts. These species will not be impacted by monopole construction because vehicular access at an existing quarry spill ford crossing will only occur while the channel is dry (June to October).
6. **Historical and Cultural Resources:** An inadvertent discovery plan has been drafted and will be on-site during all project-related ground disturbance.
7. **Archeological monitoring** is required at 5 locations to record any unanticipated archaeological materials that may be encountered during construction. These sites are within 100 meters of potentially eligible sites 45FE316, 45OK462, and 45OK500; within 100 meters of cemetery 45OK494 in case of unexpected burials outside the cemetery boundary; and at the Johnny Susap Cemetery, to protect it from damage during construction activities. Prior to construction, further coordination with the CCT THPO is required to ensure tribal monitors are present during construction activities in and near these sites.
8. **Infrastructure:** Negative effects related to congestion, including worker and public safety during construction, will be mitigated by implementation of a traffic control plan in accordance with the Washington Dept. of Transportation Traffic Manual (M 51-02.10, May 2021, or as revised).

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Public Comment

The NTIA conducted a public comment period for the CCT EA. Public notice was placed in the *Colville Tribal newspaper*; *Okanogan Valley Gazette-Tribune*; *Ferry County News Tribune*; *Grant County-Columbia Basin Herald*; and the *Spokesman Review*. The notice of the proposal and EA was also posted on NTIA's website for national exposure. The notice described the proposed Project, the comment submittal process, provided guidance on where to view the document, and included federal agency points of contact. The comment period began on July 2, 2024, and concluded on August 1, 2024. No comments were received during this period.



Decision

The NTIA, BIA, and Reclamation conclude that constructing and operating the Project as defined by the preferred alternative, including incorporation of identified BMPs, and protective measures, will not require additional mitigation. A separate mitigation plan is not required for the Project. The analyses indicate that the Proposed Action is not a major federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. The NTIA, BIA, and Reclamation have determined that preparation of an EIS is not required.

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