RECORD OF CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION

A. **Proposed Action:** Western proposes to rebuild and upgrade approximately 9.8 miles of the existing Gila-Yuma Tap 34.5-kV Transmission Line (Figure 1) to maintain and improve the reliability of electrical service to customers in the Yuma, Arizona, area. The line was built in 1943 and is nearing the end of its design life. The work includes removing the existing wood structures and conductor; and installing steel pole structures, 69-kV conductor, and overhead ground wire. Existing access roads will be used to bring personnel and equipment to the line. Construction activity is expected to begin in November 2010.

The project area extends from the Gila Substation to Structure 9-2. The line will be rebuilt within Western's existing 100-foot wide right-of-way. The majority of the transmission line is on private land; a small portion of the land is under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Reclamation (at the canal crossings). The legal description is presented in Table 1. The corresponding USGS 7.5-minute topographic maps are Fortuna, Yuma East, and Yuma West, Arizona.

Table 1. Project Area Legal Description.

Township	Range	Sections
9 South	22 West	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
8 South	23 West	33, 34, 35
9 South	23 West	1, 2, 3, 4
On the Gila and Salt River Baseline and Meridian		

B. **Categorical Exclusion Applied:** 10 CFR, Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B, B4.6: "Additions or modifications to electric power transmission facilities that would not affect the environment beyond the previously developed facility area including, but not limited to, switchyard rock ground upgrades, secondary containment projects, paving projects, seismic upgrading, tower modifications, changing insulators, and replacement of poles, circuit breakers, conductors, transformers, and crossarms."

C. **Regulatory Requirements in 10 CFR 1021.410 (b):**

1. The proposed action fits within a class of actions that is listed in Appendix B to Subpart D.

   a. The proposed action does not threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, including Department of Energy Orders (DOE) and/or Executive orders. The proposed action was reviewed for the requirements of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Migratory Bird Treaty Act

(MBTA), and all applicable DOE Orders. Figures of areas environmentally cleared for this project are attached.

b. The proposed action does not require the siting, construction, or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities.

c. The proposed action does not disturb hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or CERCLA-excluded petroleum and natural gas products that pre-exist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled and unpermitted releases.

d. The proposed action does not adversely affect environmentally sensitive resources. The proposed action was reviewed and surveyed for impacts to cultural and sensitive biological resources. Cultural and sensitive biological resources have been determined to not be affected.

   (1) Western completed NHPA Section 106 compliance. Western determined that no historic properties will be affected. The Arizona State Historic Preservation Office concurred with Western's determination.

   (2) Western determined that no Federally-listed endangered, threatened, proposed, or candidate species or critical habitat will be affected. No formal ESA Section 7 consultation was required.

   (3) Western designed the line to include provisions to mitigate bird strikes and electrocutions in accordance with the MBTA.

2. There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposal that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; and

3. The proposal is not "connected" to other actions with potentially significant impacts, is not related to other proposed actions with cumulatively significant impacts, and is not precluded by 40 CFR 1506.1 or 10 CFR 1021.211.

D. Conversations Measures

The following conservation measures will be implemented to further reduce impacts to the flat-tailed horned lizard and the Western burrowing owl and their habitat:

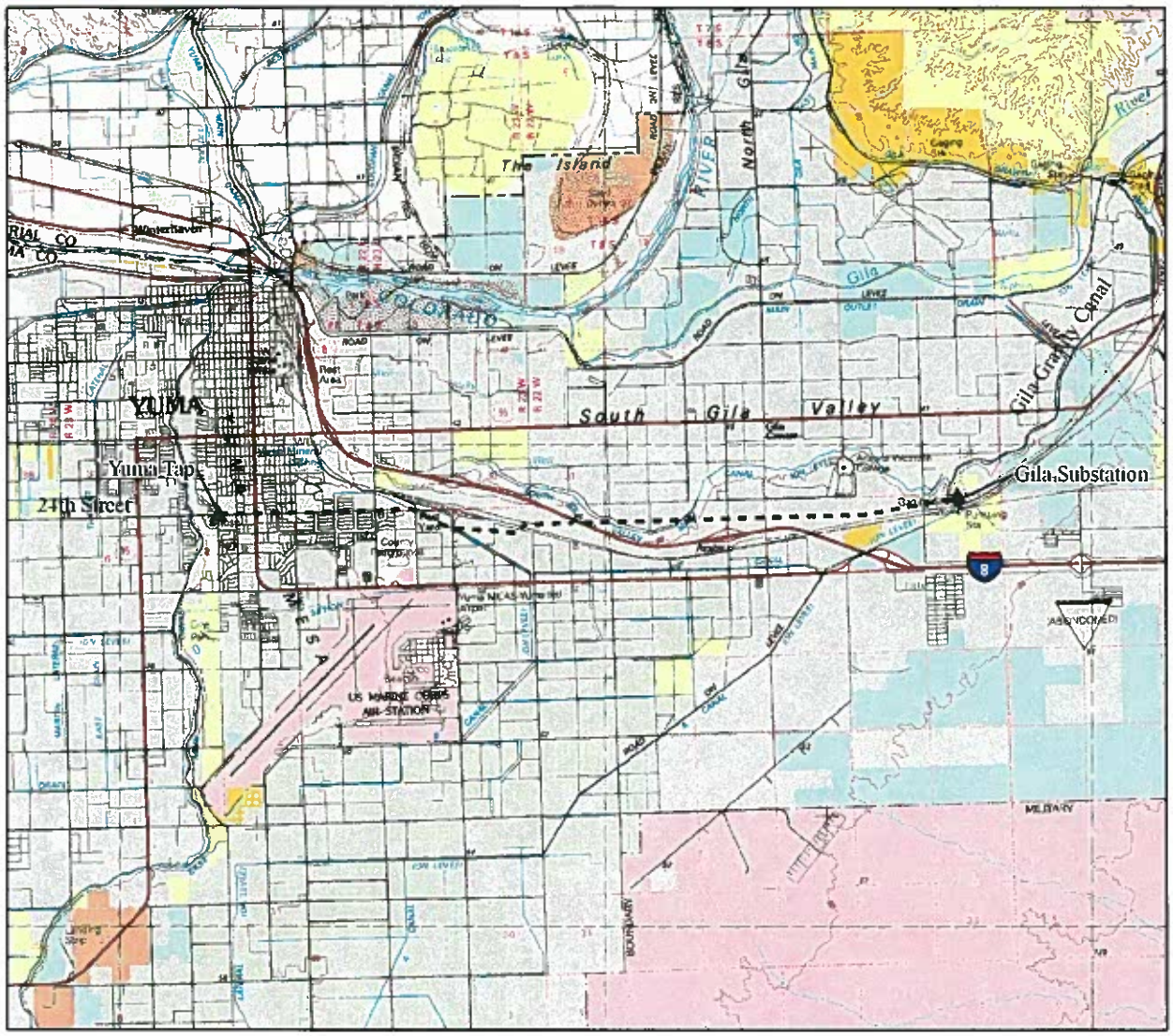
- A pre-construction survey for burrowing owls will be conducted by a qualified biologist along the project alignment within areas determined as suitable burrowing owl habitat. The survey will follow the guidelines outlined in the Burrowing Owl Project Clearance Protocol. If burrowing owls are discovered during surveys, then appropriate measures for minimizing impacts to owls will be employed as recommended in the protocol.
- Prior to beginning work, all personnel will be required to attend a tailgate meeting on safety and environmental issues. This meeting will be conducted to inform personnel of sensitive species that could be encountered and measures to minimize effects. The meeting will focus on the flat-tailed horned lizard and western burrowing owl.

- Vehicles operating on all non-public access roads (i.e., the access road along the Western utility corridor) will observe a speed limit of 15 mph or less.
- No pets or firearms will be allowed on the construction site.
- All equipment will be washed prior to entering the work site.
- All equipment shall be properly tuned and maintained to avoid leaks of fluids.
- All trash and waste items from the project area generated by construction or crew activities will be properly contained and removed on a daily basis.
- Vehicles shall use existing and permitted access roads.
- A biological monitor shall be present to ensure compliance with protective measures for the flat-tailed horned lizard and the Western burrowing owl.
- All project work areas within suitable habitat shall be clearly flagged or marked at the outer boundaries by the biological monitor to define the limit of work activities. The biological monitor shall monitor each area of active surface disturbance throughout the work day, examining areas at least hourly for the presence of flat-tailed horned lizards or burrowing owls.
- The biological monitor shall notify the COR to halt operations that may adversely affect a sensitive species, including burrowing owls, flat-tailed horned lizard, and nesting migratory birds.
- The area of disturbance to vegetation and soils shall be limited to the minimum necessary for project completion.
- When possible, existing roads shall be used for travel and equipment storage areas.
- The biological monitor shall inspect all trenches, holes and other excavations prior to backfilling. All trenches, holes and other excavations shall be covered at the end of each day.

E. <u>Determination:</u> Based on my review of information conveyed to me and in my possession (or attached) concerning the proposed action, as NEPA Compliance Officer (as authorized under DOE Order 451.1A), I have determined that the proposed action fits within the specified class of actions, the other regulatory requirements set forth above are met, and the proposed action is hereby categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

John R. Holt
NEPA Compliance Officer

7/19/10
Date



Legend

- Transmission Line
- Substation/Tap
- Private
- State
- Department of Defense
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Bureau of Land Management

0 1 2 Miles

Project Location
Gila to Yuma Tap
34.5kV Transmission Line
Upgrade Project

Western Area
Power Administration

Figure 1

Western Area Power Administration

TRANSCON ENVIRONMENTAL