



U.S. Department of Energy Categorical Exclusion Determination Form

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Proposed Action Title: Prescott-Pinnacle Peak 230-kV Transmission Line Access Road Maintenance and Localized Vegetation Management Project

Program or Field Office: Western Area Power Administration, Desert Southwest Region

Location(s) (City/County/State): Maricopa and Yavapai Counties, Arizona

Proposed Action Description:

Western Area Power Administration (Western) proposes to conduct access road maintenance and localized vegetation management along three segments of the existing Prescott-Pinnacle Peak 230-kV transmission line right-of-way (ROW). The project is located on public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, Arizona State Land Department, and private land in Maricopa and Yavapai counties, Arizona (refer to attached figures). Table 1 lists the Public Land Survey System (PLSS) information for the project.

Access roads along the transmission line have become degraded and impassable in many areas mainly due to erosion. Access road maintenance will include activities to ensure that the roads are in appropriate condition for safe and reliable access to transmission lines by maintenance and inspection crews. These activities may include grading, installing erosion-control measures, repairing low water crossings, and constructing water diversions such as water bars (ridges that direct water off the road). A grader and bulldozer would be the primary equipment types used to conduct this work.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

Categorical Exclusion(s) Applied:

B1.3 - Routine maintenance

For the complete DOE National Environmental Policy Act regulations regarding categorical exclusions, including the full text of each categorical exclusion, see Subpart D of 10 CFR Part 1021.

Regulatory Requirements in 10 CFR 1021.410(b): (See full text in regulation)

The proposal fits within a class of actions that is listed in Appendix A or B to 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D.

To fit within the classes of actions listed in 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B, a proposal must be one that would not: (1) threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders; (2) require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators), but the proposal may include categorically excluded waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment actions or facilities; (3) 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; (4) have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources, including, but not limited to, those listed in paragraph B(4) of 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B; (5) 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 listed in paragraph B(5) of 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B.

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

The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion. This proposal is not connected to other actions with potentially significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.25(a)(1)), is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)), and is not precluded by 40 CFR 1506.1 or 10 CFR 1021.211 concerning limitations on actions during preparation of an environmental impact statement.

Based on my review of the proposed action, as NEPA Compliance Officer (as authorized under DOE Order 451.1B), I have determined that the proposed action fits within the specified class(es) of action, the other regulatory requirements set forth above are met, and the proposed action is hereby categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

NEPA Compliance Officer:

Date Determined:

9.9.14

**Prescott-Pinnacle Peak 230-kV Transmission Line
Access Road Maintenance and Localized Vegetation Management
Maricopa and Yavapai Counties, Arizona
Categorical Exclusion Continuation Sheet**

Project Description (Continued)

Vegetation management would ensure that vegetation does not interfere with human safety, transmission line conductors, towers, other hardware, or impede access to the transmission line for maintenance crews. Vegetation management would be limited to within about 50 feet of the existing access road centerline. Vegetation management would be performed using manual methods (hand-controlled, powered, or non-powered tools such as chainsaws and clippers) and/or mechanical methods (such as cut-shredders, dozers, and track loaders).

Project activities would be conducted in three segments of the existing ROW:

- Segment A is roughly 2.3 miles in length, between structures 170-4 and 172-4 (Figure 2A). It is located just west of the community of Cordes Lakes, west of Interstate 17.
- Segment B is roughly 0.8 miles in length, between structures 158-1 and 158-3 (Figure 2B). It is located just north of Poland Junction.
- Segment C is roughly 2.6 miles in length, between structures 192-4 and 195-2 (Figure 2C). It is located between the north and south-bound lanes of Interstate 17, between Moore Gulch and the New River.

Table 1. Project Public Land Survey System Information (Gila & Salt River Baseline and Meridian)

<u>Township</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>Section(s)</u>
8 North	2 East	27 and 34
11 North	2 East	22, 26, 27
12 North	1 East	4
13 North	1 East	33

Special Conditions

- 1) Western will comply with all terms and conditions of Section 404 Nationwide Permit No. #3 as established by the US Army Corps of Engineers, and conditions of the Section 401 Conditional Water Quality Certification, certified by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.
- 2) Saguaros and agaves will be left in place and undisturbed wherever possible. Saguaros will be topped as opposed to removing the entire plant wherever possible. Small saguaros (less than 10 feet tall) and agave which cannot be avoided will be replanted outside of the impact area.
- 3) A qualified biologist shall conduct pre-construction surveys for federally listed and sensitive plant species prior to vegetation-disturbing activities in any location. Sensitive resources will be flagged and avoided during project activities.
- 4) In Segment C only:
 - a) Project activities will be scheduled when tortoises are inactive (November 1 to March 1), as feasible. Prior to any surface- or vegetation-disturbing activities in suitable habitat, a qualified biologist shall conduct a survey for desert tortoises. During the desert tortoise season (March 1 through November 1), these surveys shall be conducted within 24 hours of the initiation of

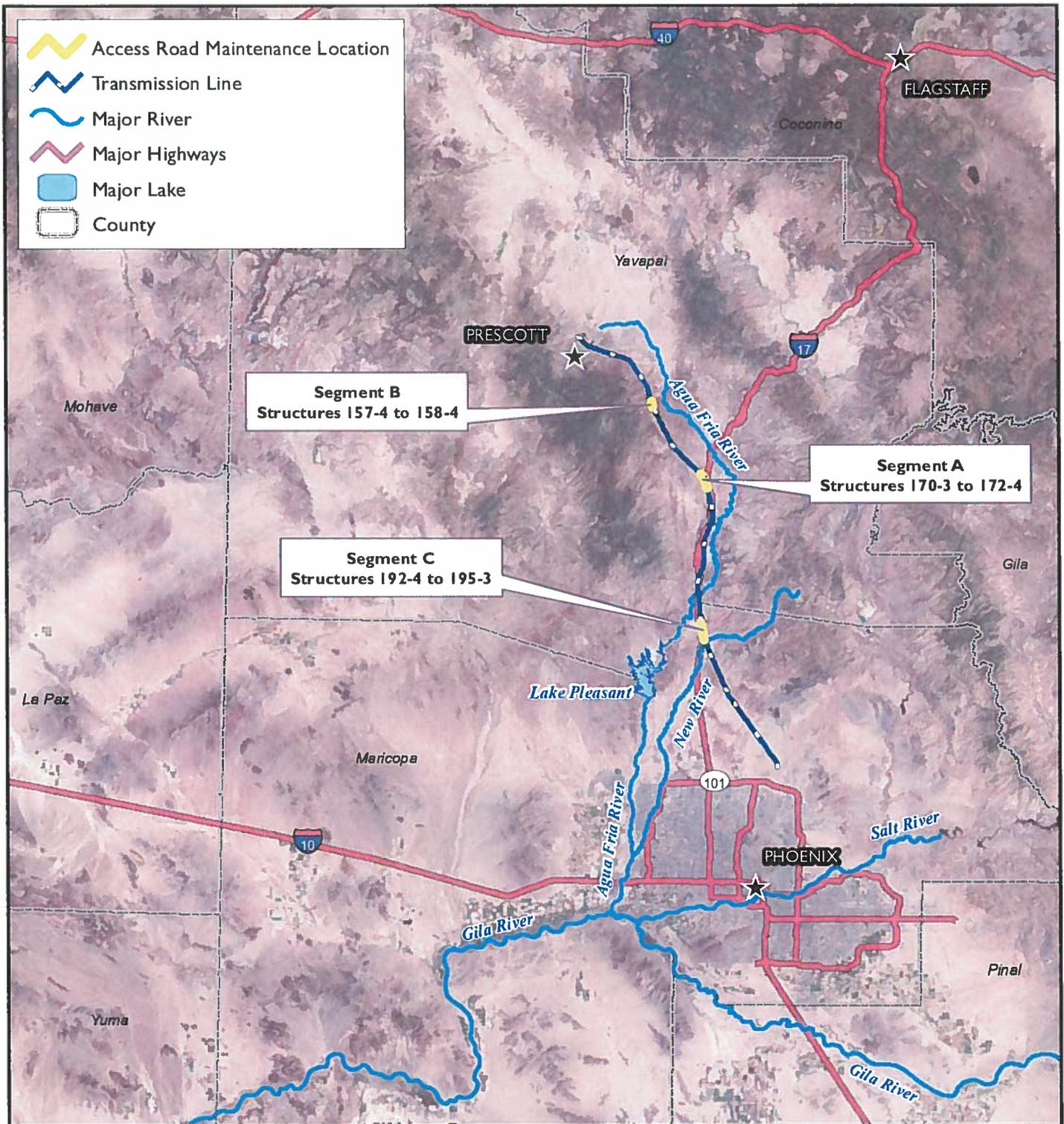
surface- or vegetation-disturbing activities.

- b) A qualified Biological Monitor shall be present for all project activities conducted during in suitable habitat during the normal tortoise activity period (March 1 to November 1). The Biological Monitor's responsibilities will include, but will not be limited to (1) inspection of locations of any tortoise burrows or sign, or active bird nests that were located during the pre-construction survey (see below); (2) monitoring potential activity of these species in the project area; (3) regular inspection of the work areas, and other areas related to project activities, for desert tortoise; and (4) regular inspection beneath vehicles and equipment to ensure that they do not present potential hazards to wildlife, including desert tortoises. The Biological Monitor will be authorized by Western to temporarily halt project activity if needed to prevent potential harm to desert tortoise, native nesting birds, or other sensitive species. The work supervisor will coordinate with the Biological Monitor on planned or ongoing maintenance activities and any specific monitoring requirements for each activity in those areas.
- 5) No project activities will take place in the vicinity of a desert tortoise. If a desert tortoise is observed, it will be left to move away from the work site on its own, and activities shall be modified to avoid injuring or harming it. If activities cannot be modified, tortoises shall be moved from harm's way. Upon discovery of a desert tortoise in harm's way, a biologist may translocate the animal the minimum distance possible (but not more than 2 miles) within appropriate habitat to ensure its safety from death, injury, or collection associated with the project or other activities. Only a qualified biologist may handle a desert tortoise and Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) guidelines will be used to reduce impacts to tortoises (AGFD 2007).
- 6) Project activities which may disturb soil or vegetation will be conducted between August 1 and February 14, generally outside the breeding bird season, as feasible. If this is not possible, the Biological Monitor shall conduct pre-construction surveys for nesting birds no more than 2 days prior to beginning work in any location. Project activities may not disturb an active bird nest. If an active bird nest is located on or adjacent to the site, the Biological Monitor will designate and flag an appropriate buffer area around the nest where activities will not be permitted. The buffer area will be based on the bird species and nature of project activity.
- 7) In the event of archaeological discoveries or discoveries of human remains during ground-disturbing activities, project activities must cease in the immediate vicinity of the discovery and Western's Regional Preservation Officer (RPO; 602-605-2842) must be notified immediately. Western's RPO will coordinate with the appropriate agencies and tribes to determine the appropriate course of action.

Checklist for Categorical Exclusion Determination, revised Nov. 2011

Application of Categorical Exclusions (1021.410)	Disagree	Agree	Unknown
(b)(1) The proposal fits within a class of actions that is listed in appendix A or B to subpart D.		X	
(b)(2) There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposal that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal, including, but not limited to, scientific controversy about the environmental effects of the proposal; uncertain effects or effects involving unique or unknown risks; and unresolved conflicts concerning alternate uses of available resources		X	
(b)(3) The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion. Segmentation can occur when a proposal is broken down into small parts in order to avoid the appearance of significance of the total action. The scope of a proposal must include the consideration of connected and cumulative actions, that is, the proposal is not connected to other actions with potentially significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.25(a)(1), is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)), and is not precluded by 40 CFR 1506.1 or § 1021.211 of this part concerning limitations on actions during EIS preparation.		X	
B. Conditions that are Integral Elements of the Classes of Actions in Appendix B. :	NO	YES	UNKNOWN
(1) Threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders.	X		
(2) Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators), but the proposal may include categorically excluded waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment actions or facilities;	X		
(3) 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;	X		
(4) Have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources. An environmentally sensitive resource is typically a resource that has been identified as needing protection through Executive Order, statute, or regulation by Federal, state, or local government, or a federally recognized Indian tribe. An action may be categorically excluded if, although sensitive resources are present, the action would not have the potential to cause significant impacts on those resources (such as construction of a building with its foundation well above a sole-source aquifer or upland surface soil removal on a site that has wetlands). Environmentally sensitive resources include, but are not limited to:	X		

(i)	Property (such as sites, buildings, structures, and objects) of historic, archaeological, or architectural significance designated by a Federal, state, or local government, or property determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places;	X		
(ii)	Federally-listed threatened or endangered species or their habitat (including critical habitat) or Federally- proposed or candidate species or their habitat (Endangered Species Act); state-listed or state-proposed endangered or threatened species or their habitat; Federally-protected marine mammals and Essential Fish Habitat (Marine Mammal Protection Act; Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act); and otherwise Federally-protected species (such as under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act or the Migratory Bird Treaty Act);	X		
(iii)	Floodplains and wetlands (as defined in 10 CFR 1022.4, —Compliance with Floodplain and Wetland Environmental Review Requirements: “Definitions,” or its successor);	X		
(iv)	Areas having a special designation such as Federally- and state-designated wilderness areas, national parks, national monuments, national natural landmarks, wild and scenic rivers, state and Federal wildlife refuges, scenic areas (such as National Scenic and Historic Trails or National Scenic Areas), and marine sanctuaries;	X		
(v)	Prime or unique farmland, or other farmland of statewide or local importance, as defined at 7 CFR 658.2(a), —Farmland Protection Policy Act: Definitions, or its successor;	X		
(vi)	Special sources of water (such as sole-source aquifers, wellhead protection areas, and other water sources that are vital in a region); and	X		
(vii)	Tundra, coral reefs, or rain forests.; or	X		
(5)	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.	X		



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Name/Org DSW Date: 11/05/2012

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Source: DSW, Aspen EG, ESRI

Figure 1.
Prescott-Pinnacle Peak
Access Road Maintenance Project

Overview Map



1 in = 20 miles

