

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION

Rocky Mountain Region, Western Area Power Administration

**Beaver Creek - Sterling 115-kV Transmission Line
Fiber Optic Ground Wire Installation
Logan, Morgan, and Washington Counties, Colorado
Project Number: 2014-068**

- A. Brief Description of Proposal:** Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), Rocky Mountain Region, proposes to install new fiber optic ground wire (OPGW) on WAPA's existing Beaver Creek - Sterling (BC-STG) 115-kV Transmission Line. The OPGW would be installed on the entire 35.86-mile line, between the Beaver Creek (BC) Substation in Brush, Colorado, and the Sterling (STG) Substation in Sterling, Colorado. This project is part of WAPA's ongoing program to update and improve its communication system, with the intent of replacing microwave rings with fiber optics.

The new OPGW would replace the existing overhead ground wire (OGW) on the BC-STG Transmission Line. Spool trucks would be used at regular intervals ("pulling sites") to pull, wind, and remove the old OGW, then feed, tighten, and secure the new OPGW. In addition, the individual lengths of OPGW would be spliced together at regular intervals along the spans. Equipment that may be used to complete the OGW removal and OPGW installation includes helicopters, splicing trucks, splicing trailers, bucket trucks, and spool trailers. Work would be restricted to the existing right-of-way (ROW) and no roadwork would occur unless the OPGW contractor requests otherwise, in which case additional environmental review would occur.

- B. Number and Title of the Categorical Exclusion Being Applied:** (See text in 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D.)

B4.7 Fiber Optic Cable

Adding fiber optic cables to transmission facilities or burying fiber optic cable in existing powerline or pipeline ROW. Covered actions may include associated vaults and pulling and tensioning sites outside of ROW in nearby previously disturbed or developed areas.

- C. Regulatory Requirements in 10 CFR 1021.410 (b):** (See full text in regulation and attached checklist.)

- 1) The proposed action fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix A or B to Subpart D. For classes of actions listed in Appendix B, the following conditions are integral elements. To fit within a class, the proposal must not:

- Threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders;
- 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;
- 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;
- 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

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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 those listed in paragraph B. (4) (see Attachment A).

- 2) There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposal that may affect *the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal*.
- 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. Special Stipulations Pertaining to the Proposal:

If the scope of work of this project changes, WAPA’s Environmental Division must be contacted to determine whether additional environmental review is required.

This Categorical Exclusion expires on December 31, 2018. If all project work has not been completed by the expiration date, or if the need for an environmental compliance extension is anticipated, WAPA’s Environmental Division must be contacted for an updated environmental review.

To comply with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, work should be scheduled outside the February 1 to July 31 general nesting period. If work is to be done during this period, contact WAPA’s Environmental Division at least 60-days before the work is scheduled so that they may arrange for a pedestrian survey to be conducted no more than five (5) calendar days in advance of the maintenance crews to identify active nests that are to be avoided.

The Contractor shall not use any earth moving or blading equipment to make any improvements to the existing access roads. All vehicles used on the ROW access roads shall be rubber tired. If road improvements or staging areas are necessary, the Contractor shall submit a detailed description of the improvements to WAPA for environmental review and approval 60-days prior to construction.

WAPA has a clean vehicle policy intended to prevent the transport of non-native and invasive plants and animals, including noxious weeds and aquatic nuisance species. Operators will be required to thoroughly wash all vehicles and equipment (trailers, trucks, UTVs, etc.) before entering the action area and working on the project. In addition, the Contractor shall minimize the introduction and/or spread of noxious weeds by avoiding vehicle traffic in known weedy areas, and by rewashing equipment if weeds are encountered. The Contractor shall reclaim all disturbed areas as soon as practical after construction.

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To minimize impacts to the environment and prevent damage to access roads, operation of off-road equipment will not be permitted during periods of heavy rains, when soils are wet, or when excessive soil damage may occur due to unsuitable operating conditions. Project work shall not be conducted during periods when the soil is too wet to adequately support equipment. If equipment creates ruts in excess of six (6) inches deep, the soil shall be deemed too wet to adequately support equipment.

The Contractor shall avoid disturbance of vegetation and shall limit the use of WAPA's ROW within the following spans of Structures: 13/5-14/1, 14/5-15/1, 15/2-15/3, 15/6-16/1, 16/4-16/5, 16/8-17/3, 17/8-18/2, 18/4-18/5, 18/8-19/1, 20/2-20/4, and 35/3-35/5. No fueling, pulling sites, staging, or storage areas will be placed within the aforementioned spans unless approved by WAPA's Environmental Division. If the Contractor wishes to place fueling, pulling, staging, or storage areas within any of the aforementioned spans, the Contractor shall allow WAPA a minimum of 60-days, after receipt of the proposed site, to coordinate with the appropriate agencies and review and environmentally clear the area.

No pads or landings shall be constructed within the boundaries of identified culturally sensitive areas located within the existing Beaver Creek - Sterling 115-kV Transmission Line ROW. Project impacts within these areas shall be limited to driving rubber-treaded vehicles on a regularly maintained existing access road and/or temporarily parking a rubber-treaded vehicle or fiber optic splicing/spool trailer, when complete avoidance is not possible.

Culturally sensitive areas that are to be avoided will be identified on maps provided to the Contractor.

If any cultural resources are inadvertently discovered during implementation of the proposed action, work within 100-feet of the discovery area shall halt immediately, WAPA's archaeologist shall be contacted immediately, and the resource shall be evaluated by an archaeologist or historian who meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards (36 CFR Part 61). Work in the area of discovery shall not resume until notification to proceed is provided by WAPA's archaeologist.

If any possible human remains are inadvertently discovered during implementation of the proposed action, work within 100-feet of the discovery area shall halt immediately and WAPA's archaeologist shall be notified immediately by telephone (no later than 24 hours from the time of discovery). A reasonable effort shall be made to protect the remains from looting and/or further damage. If the discovery is located on Federal or tribal lands, the provisions of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990, as amended, and implementing regulations 43 CFR 10 shall be followed. In this situation, a mandatory minimum 30-day halt to construction activities in the area of discovery is required. If the discovery is located on State or private lands, the appropriate State laws regarding the discovery of human remains shall be followed. Work in the area of discovery shall not resume until notification to proceed is provided by WAPA's archaeologist.

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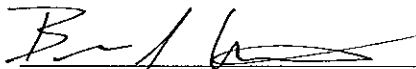
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The Contractor shall exercise care to preserve the natural landscape and shall conduct this project to prevent any unnecessary destruction, scarring, or defacing of the natural surroundings in the project vicinity. Vegetation shall be preserved and shall be protected from damage by the Contractor's operations and equipment. If operations or equipment cause terrain damage, the Contractor shall repair the damage.

To prevent spills of fuel, oil, hydraulic fluid, or other petroleum products into the environment during fueling or maintenance activities for vehicles, equipment, or tools, project site personnel shall maintain an appropriately sized containment device to contain incidental spills under any work area. All fueling activities shall take place over a drip pan lined with absorbent pads. Used absorbent pads shall be placed into an approved DOT container and removed from the project site for appropriate disposal. In addition, project site personnel shall have on hand sufficient supplies, such as absorbent mats, booms, socks, or other spill containment materials, to be available for immediate spill prevention, containment, and cleanup prior to commencing any refueling activities.

- E. **Determination:** Based on my review of information provided to me and in my possession concerning the proposed action, 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 categorically excluded from requirements for an EA or an EIS.



Signature

Date: 27 MAR 2017

Brian Little
NEPA Compliance Officer
Rocky Mountain Customer Service Region
Western Area Power Administration

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ATTACHMENT A

**Conditions That Are Integral Elements of the Classes
of Actions in Appendix B That Apply to This Proposal**
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 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. Extraordinary circumstances are unique situations presented by specific proposals, 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	X		

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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. 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		

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(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		