

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION

Rocky Mountain Region, Western Area Power Administration

**Medicine Bow Line Switch and Structure Replacement on the
Miracle Mile - Snowy Range No. 1 115-kV Transmission Line
Carbon County, Wyoming
Project Number: 2015-104**

A. Brief Description of Proposal: Western Area Power Administration (Western) proposes to hire a contractor to construct and complete the Medicine Bow Line Switch and Structure Replacement on the Miracle Mile - Snowy Range No. 1 115-kV Transmission Line in Carbon County, Wyoming. The principal components of the Medicine Bow Line Switch and Structure Replacement work includes removing the existing 3SWT and 4SWT switch structures at Structures 47/1 and 47/4 and installing new glued laminated wood pole switch structures. The line switch will then be completed by installing new switches 4263-4260 and 4267-4270, installing new tension insulator assemblies, and reattaching all other associated hardware on the existing Miracle Mile - Snowy Range No. 1 115-kV Transmission Line. All construction activities would occur entirely within Western's existing right-of-way (ROW) easement.

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

B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities.

Additions or modifications to electric power transmission facilities within a previously disturbed or developed facility area. Covered activities include, but are not limited to, switchyard rock grounding upgrades, secondary containment projects, paving projects, seismic upgrading, tower modifications, load shaping projects (such as installation and use of flywheels and battery arrays), changing insulators, and replacement of poles, circuit breakers, conductors, transformers, and crossarms.

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 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

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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, Western's Environmental Division must be contacted for additional environmental review.

This CX is valid for 1 year after the signature date. If construction has not been completed by the expiration date, or if need for a project extension is anticipated, Western's Environmental Division must be contacted for an updated environmental review.

If construction is to occur between March 1 and July 31, Western shall conduct a migratory bird nesting survey prior to construction along the Miracle Mile - Snowy Range No.1 115-kV Transmission Line to determine nesting activity. The contractor shall avoid active nests during construction activities. If active nests are observed between March 1 through July 31, buffers will be placed in the area.

If any cultural resources are inadvertently discovered during implementation of the proposed action, work within 50 feet of the discovery area shall halt immediately, Western's archaeologist shall be contacted, and the resource shall be evaluated by an archaeologist or historian meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards (48 FR 22716, Sept. 1983). Work in the area of discovery may not resume until it has been inspected, evaluated, and all appropriate parties have been consulted.

The contractor shall limit the movement of its crew and equipment to the ROW, including access routes. The contractor shall limit movement on the ROW to minimize damage to grazing land, crops, or property, and shall avoid unnecessary land disturbance.

The contractor is responsible for determining all pulling and splicing locations with exception of those required in the specifications. If the contractor wishes to use pulling locations or staging areas that are outside of Western's ROW, then the contractor shall allow Western a minimum of 60 days, after receipt of the proposed site, to coordinate with the appropriate agencies to review and environmentally clear the area.

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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. No maintenance activities shall be performed during periods when the soil is too wet to adequately support equipment. If equipment creates ruts in excess of 6 inches deep, the soil shall be deemed too wet to adequately support the equipment.

Western has a clean vehicle policy and all equipment used must be cleaned prior to use in order to prevent transporting of invasive plant or noxious weed seeds. Operators will be required to wash all machinery (trailers, trucks, skid-steer loaders, etc.) before entering the action area and working on the project to prevent transport of non-native invasive species within the transmission line corridor.

If the used poles are sold or donated, the Project Manager will ensure the recipients have read and signed Western's consumer information sheet for treated wood poles and crossarms.

- 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: 20 APR 2016

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

Prepared by: Erik Bray

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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, 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	X		

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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:			
(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		

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<p>(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.</p>	X		
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