

## ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION

### Rocky Mountain Region, Western Area Power Administration

#### Alcova-Casper North 115-kV Transmission Line Fiber Optic Ground Wire Installation Project Natrona County, Wyoming

- A. **Brief Description of Proposal:** Western Area Power Administration (Western) proposes to install a Fiber Optic Ground Wire (OPGW) on the Alcova-Casper North (A-CASN) 115-kV Transmission Line between the Casper and Alcova Substations. The transmission line is approximately 29 miles in length and is located in Natrona County, Wyoming. The OPGW installation is part of Western's ongoing program to update and improve its communication system.

The OPGW will replace the existing overhead ground wire (OGW) on the A-CASN Transmission Line. Termination of the OPGW will be required at the substations. Other splice boxes or "pulling site" locations depend on the cable reel or spool length and "pulling sites" would be determined and communicated by Western crews and would be located on the existing right-of-way (ROW) easement. Transmission line anchors will be installed at Structures 24/2, 15/2, 10/5, and 1/4.

The new cable would not be visibly different from the existing OGW. The project would not change the size of the right-of-way or the way it is maintained. Spool trucks will be used to pull, wind, and remove the old OGW and then feed, tighten, and secure the new OPGW. In addition, a splicing truck, boom (cherry picker) bucket truck, and a cable spool container truck will be used.

This work may be accomplished using a rubber-tired motor grader, track dozer, backhoe, a crane, manlift, backhoe, rubber-tired pressure digger/derrick, skid steer loader, pole trailer, and line trucks. All work will be confined to Western's ROW transmission line and access road easements.

Work is scheduled for August 2015.

- 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 rights-of-way. Covered actions may include associated vaults and pulling and tensioning sites outside of rights-of-way 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;

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- 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 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:**

This Categorical Exclusion is valid from the signature date through the end of calendar year 2015. If construction work has not commenced within that time or the scope of work changes, Western's Environmental Division must be contacted for an updated environmental review.

**Environmentally sensitive areas that are to be avoided will be identified on maps provided to Western's maintenance crews. Pulling sites are prohibited within 200 feet of Structure 10/1, and between Structures 9/2 and 9/3. However, pulling sites can be located within 50 feet of Structures 9/2 or 9/3.**

If any cultural materials are discovered during construction, work in the area shall halt immediately, Western's RMR Regional Preservation Officer shall be contacted, and the material be evaluated by an archaeologist or historian meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards (48 FR 22716, Sept. 1983).

Western's maintenance crews are responsible for determining all pulling and splicing locations. This Categorical Exclusion does not approve work outside of Western's ROW. If pulling locations or staging areas are located outside of Western's ROW, then the maintenance crews shall allow Western a minimum of 60 days, after receipt of the proposed site, to review and environmentally clear the area.

All equipment used will be cleaned prior to use in the area to prevent transporting of invasive plant or noxious weed seeds.

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Disturbed areas not needed for maintenance access will be reseeded using native plant species that are preferred browse of pronghorn and mule deer.

Western shall exercise care to preserve the natural landscape and shall conduct this construction operation to prevent any unnecessary destruction, scarring, or defacing of the natural surroundings in the project vicinity. Except where clearing is required for permanent works, or excavation operations, vegetation shall be preserved and shall be protected from damage by Western's construction operations and equipment.

Pulling and splicing locations and other disturbed areas will be located at least 100 feet, where practical, from rivers, streams (including ephemeral streams), ponds, lakes, and reservoirs.

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 construction or routine maintenance activities shall be performed during periods when the soil is too wet to adequately support construction equipment. If equipment creates ruts in excess of six inches deep, the soil shall be deemed too wet to adequately support construction equipment.

- 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.

C. Shane Kimbrough  
Signature

Date: 8/12/15

C. Shane Kimbrough  
NEPA Compliance Officer  
Rocky Mountain Customer Service Region  
Western Area Power Administration

Prepared by: Brian Little

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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

<b>Application of Categorical Exclusions (1021.410)</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Unknown</b>
(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 BIS preparation.		X	
<b>B. Conditions that are Integral Elements of the Classes of Actions in Appendix B.</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	X		

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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:			
(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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(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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