

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION
Rocky Mountain Region, Western Area Power Administration

Big George-Heart Mountain-North Cody Substations and 69-kV Transmission Line Upgrades
Park County, Wyoming
Project Number: 2016-190

- A. Brief Description of Proposal:** Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) proposes to conduct transmission line upgrade and improvements on its Big George (BGG) - Heart Mountain (HM) – North Cody (NC) 69-kV transmission system. Increased load in the Cody, Wyoming area has required the system to be upgraded to 115-kV in order to transmit additional energy and maintain reliability of the system. The improvements to the system, in general, are to upgrade the equipment in the NC and BGG Substations and string new conductor on the unused east side of 10.8-miles of existing double circuit transmission structures on the BGG-HM and BGG-NC Transmission Lines. WAPA would install new overhead fiber optic ground wire (OPGW) on 11.2-miles of double and single circuit transmission structures on the BGG-HM Transmission Line as well as upgrade the existing 69-kV Transmission Line to 115-kV with new insulators from HM to NC. A portable office trailer and portable toilet will be located at the Substations as work is accomplished at each location. Access along the Transmission Lines will be accomplished using existing access roads. Any ancillary work on access that may be necessary in order to provide access for construction at specific locations will be reviewed by WAPA on a case-by-case basis.

The specifics of the upgrades include:

At the BGG Substation a new replacement control building and associated battery systems and cable cabinets will be constructed, and the perimeter fence on the south side of the compound would be extended 30 feet to the south. A new access gate would be installed on the northeast corner of the yard. Other additions to the yard would be a Station Service Structure, padmount transformer, and safety switch. Station Service Potential Transformer KZ3A3 would be removed and oil power circuit breaker JY4A would be replaced. New equipment to be added in a new 115-kV breaker bay on the ring bus are Breaker BGG 562, Disconnect Switch 563, Disconnect Switch with ground blades 469-460, and four coupling capacitor voltage transformers VY4A1, VY4A2, VY4A3, VY4B1.

On the BGG-HM, BGG-NC Transmission Line WAPA would install 10.8-miles of new 477 ACSR conductor on the unused east side of the existing double circuit steel monopoles, along with a 48-count OPGW. Two new steel monopoles would be constructed near the Glendale Tap structure for the BGG-NC Transmission Line to cross over the Glendale Tap Transmission Line. One wood 3-pole angle approach structure would be placed near the BGG Substation. Two-miles of extra strength overhead ground wire would be added from structure 8/6 to 2/1 to allow OPGW to continue into the HM Substation. Optical splice boxes would be added at BGG Substation, structure 3/1, Glendale Tap, structure 8/6, and NC Substation.

At the NC Substation a new 115-kV Transmission Line bay would be added with an NC 162 Breaker, 161/160 and 163 disconnect switches, and VY1A and VY2A1 coupling capacitor voltage transformers. A new 115/69-34.5/13.8 (buried) 80 MVA transformer, new 5 MVA transformer, two 34.5 kV circuit breakers in bay 1 and new bay 5, and a Station Service Structure will be added. Surge arresters from the 69-kV bus would be removed as would ground switch 550 ZZ5A. A 3-phase CT would be relocated to the Pendley Bay, and oil PT's VX1C and VX1A would be replaced. The NC-Pendley (NC-PNY) 69-kV Transmission Line would be relocated

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for a new approach to the west side of the Substation requiring moving pole 47/11 onto a new foundation, installing a new 011D steel pole 39 feet south of the fence line, and installing two new 3-pole glued-laminate dead end angle structures on the west side of the yard.

WAPA would remove 0.4-miles of existing 477 ACSR conductor from the north side of double circuit steel monopoles between Heart Mountain Substation and existing HM-NC structure 2/1. The remaining 3.8 mile long HM-NC 69-kV Transmission line would be converted to 115-kV. The project would relocate the existing HM-NC approach from the west side of North Cody Substation into the south side by adding two new weathered steel monopole structures on new foundations. The existing polymer insulators will be replaced with shorter porcelain insulators to maintain proper clearance for conductors. The improvements to the NC Substation would require WAPA, at some future date, to purchase 0.55 acres of private property adjacent to the present Substation. The purchase would be for property along the Substations eastern fence boundary approximately 72 feet east from the present fence boundary and along the entire 330 feet of the existing Substation fence line.

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;

B4.7 Fiber optic cable;

B4.13 Upgrading and rebuilding existing powerlines

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;

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- 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:

- 1) If the scope of work of this project changes, WAPA’s Environmental Division must be contacted to determine whether additional environmental review is required.
- 2) **This Categorical Exclusion expires three years from the signature date.** 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.
- 3) WAPA shall design and construct the transmission line and substation structures in conformance with the most current editions of Suggested Practices for Avian Protection on Power Lines and Reducing Avian Collisions with Power Lines, both published by the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC), to minimize avian collision and electrocution risk while maintaining safe and reliable electrical service.
- 4) Any injured or dead birds encountered on WAPA’s ROW shall be immediately reported to the RMR Avian Protection Leads at 970-593-8803 or 970-278-7119. Additional documentation, such as photographs and GPS coordinates, may be requested to support WAPA’s reporting requirements to the USFWS. Any active nests located on WAPA’s transmission structures, substation equipment, or other areas that may threaten the safety of the nesting birds or pose a threat of fire hazard, mechanical failure, or power outage shall also be reported to the RMR Avian Protection Leads as soon as possible.

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- 5) **In order to comply with Bureau of Land Management and Wyoming Game and Fish requirements for the protection of greater sage-grouse the following Conservation Measures Apply:**
- a. **Ground disturbing earthwork or construction outside the fenced perimeter of the Big George Substation will be scheduled outside of the March 15 – June 30 timeframe.**
 - b. **Any work on the Big George-Heart Mountain Transmission Line from the Big George Substation to Structure 3/2 will be avoided from March 15-June 30.**
 - c. **If work is required within these time frames WAPA’s Environmental Division must be contacted immediately so alternative arrangements may be made if possible.**
- 6) Culturally sensitive areas that are to be avoided will be identified on maps provided to WAPA’s maintenance crews. No access road maintenance will occur within culturally sensitive areas and all access for access road maintenance crews will occur within existing access roads.
- 7) 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.
- 8) 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 Part 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.
- 9) 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.

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- 10) WAPA 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 WAPA's maintenance operations and equipment as much as possible. If operations or equipment cause terrain damage, the maintenance crew shall repair the damage.
- 11) 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 construction equipment. If equipment creates ruts in excess of six inches deep, the soil shall be deemed too wet to adequately support construction equipment.
- 12) 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 and Date

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

Prepared by: Timothy M. Snowden

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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 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	X		

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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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