

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

Casper – Glendo North 115-kV and Dave Johnston – Goshen 230-kV Transmission Lines
Fiber Optic Ground Wire Sharing with PacifiCorp
Converse County, Wyoming
Project Number: 2017-103

- A. Brief Description of Proposal:** Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) proposes to install new fiber optic ground wire (OPGW) linking the Casper – Glendo North (CAS-GLD N) 115-kV Transmission Line, the Dave Johnston – Goshen (DJ-GOS) 230-kV Transmission Line, and the Bixby Substation (a PacifiCorp facility), as part of a fiber sharing agreement between WAPA and PacifiCorp. This proposed action includes the installation of buried fiber between CAS-GLD N Structure 34/5 and DJ-GOS Structure 1/2, the installation of OPGW between DJ-GOS Structures 0/5 and 1/2, and the installation of buried fiber between DJ-GOS Structure 0/5 and the Bixby Substation (located approximately 0.45 miles east of the DJ-GOS line). In total, approximately one mile of OPGW and 0.5 miles of buried fiber will be installed. This project is part of WAPA’s ongoing program to update and improve its communication system.

The new OPGW would replace an existing overhead ground wire (OGW) on the DJ-GOS transmission line. The OPGW would not be visibly different from the existing OGW. The existing OGW would be used to pull the new OPGW into place, with “pulling sites” positioned at regular intervals to pull, wind, and remove the old OGW, and 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 including a helicopter, bucket trucks, wire pullers and tensioners, cranes, splicing trailers, and work trucks would be used to install the new OPGW. The buried fiber would be installed in new conduit where necessary, and would utilize an existing hand hole and fiber conduit into the Bixby Substation. The conduit and buried fiber installation would be completed via open trenching and/or directional boring, using a skid steer loader, small excavator, and work trucks. Work would occur in WAPA’s existing CAS-GLD N and DJ-GOS rights-of-way (ROWs), as well as in areas where new ROW grants would be negotiated with landowners. No roadwork would occur.

This Categorical Exclusion (CX) supersedes the original CX issued August 30, 2017, with an original expiration date of December 31, 2018. The proposed action described within remains the same as the originally-issued CX. The Special Stipulations (Section D, below) have been updated for this CX and supersede all original stipulations.

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

B4.7 Fiber Optic Cable

- 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:

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Project Number: 2017-103

- 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 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 December 31, 2020.** 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) If any cultural resources are inadvertently discovered during implementation of the proposed action, work within 100-feet of the discovery area must halt immediately, WAPA’s archaeologist must be contacted immediately, and the resource must 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 must not resume until notification to proceed is provided by WAPA’s archaeologist.

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

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Converse County, Wyoming
Project Number: 2017-103

- 4) If any possible human remains are inadvertently discovered during implementation of the proposed action, work within 100-feet of the discovery area must halt immediately and WAPA's archaeologist must be notified immediately by telephone (no later than 24 hours from the time of discovery). A reasonable effort must 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 must 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 must be followed. Work in the area of discovery must not resume until notification to proceed is provided by WAPA's archaeologist.
- 5) 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.
- 6) WAPA must exercise care to preserve the natural landscape and must conduct this project to prevent any unnecessary destruction, scarring, or defacing of the natural surroundings in the project vicinity. Except where clearing is required for permanent works, approved construction roads, or excavation operations, vegetation must be preserved and must be protected from damage by WAPA's construction operations and equipment. If operations or equipment cause terrain damage, the maintenance crew must repair the damage.
- 7) 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 must 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 must be deemed too wet to adequately support construction equipment.
- 8) Any injured or dead birds encountered on WAPA's ROW must 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 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 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 must also be reported to the RMR Avian Protection Leads as soon as possible.
- 9) 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 must maintain an appropriately sized containment device to contain incidental spills under any work area. All fueling activities must take place over a drip pan lined with

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Rocky Mountain Region, Western Area Power Administration

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Converse County, Wyoming
*Project Number: 2017-103***

absorbent pads. Used absorbent pads must be placed into an approved DOT container and removed from the project site for appropriate disposal. In addition, project site personnel must 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: Andrea M. Severson

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION

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Project Number: 2017-103**

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		

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Converse County, Wyoming

Project Number: 2017-103

<p>(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:</p>	X		
<p>(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;</p>	X		
<p>(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);</p>	X		
<p>(iii) Floodplains and wetlands (as defined in 10 CFR 1022.4, —Compliance with Floodplain and Wetland Environmental Review Requirements: “Definitions,” or its successor);</p>	X		
<p>(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;</p>	X		
<p>(v) Prime or unique farmland, or other farmland of statewide or local importance, as defined at 7 CFR</p>	X		

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Converse County, Wyoming

Project Number: 2017-103

658.2(a), —Farmland Protection Policy Act: Definitions, or its successor;			
(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		