

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION



Proposed Action Title: Upper Molina Substation-Lower Molina Substation 115-kV Transmission Line Optical Ground Wire Installation and Access Road Maintenance

Location: Mesa County, Colorado

Project Number: 2019-038

Expiration Date: December 31, 2024

A. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION:

Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), Rocky Mountain Region (RMR), proposes to install approximately 4.5 miles of optical ground wire (OPGW) and perform routine maintenance on the access road associated with the Upper Molina Substation-Lower Molina Substation (UMW-LMW) 115-kV Transmission Line. The project is located in Mesa County, Colorado, and is part of WAPA's ongoing program to update and improve its communication systems. The OPGW will be installed from Structure 0/1 to Structure 4/4. To install the OPGW, pulling sites will be positioned within the right-of-way (ROW) at the Upper Molina Power Plant and outside the ROW on private land east of the Lower Molina Power Plant. The pulling sites will be used to pull OPGW from wire reel trailers, feed the OPGW through hardware on the transmission structures, tighten the OPGW between structure spans, and terminate the OPGW at both ends of the transmission line. Access road maintenance from 0/1 to 4/4 will be required to allow safe access of equipment along the project area. Equipment that will be used for this project may include an excavator, motor grader, bulldozer, dump truck, helicopter, bucket trucks, OPGW reel trailer, wire pullers, tensioners, cranes, and work trucks. The OPGW reel trailer will be anchored to a heavy piece of rubber-treaded equipment, therefore there will be no ground disturbance at the pulling sites. The work will take place on WAPA's existing ROW, on private lands, and on public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. WAPA will be required to obtain a temporary easement for use of the off-ROW pulling site near the Lower Molina Power Plant.

This Categorical Exclusion (CX) replaces the original CX issued May 8, 2019, with an original expiration date of May 6, 2021. The Proposed Action (Section A) remains the same; minor updates have been made to the Stipulations (Section B) to reflect the new expiration date and current standard language.

B. STIPULATIONS PERTAINING TO PROPOSAL:

- 1) If the scope of work of this project changes, RMR's Environment Department must be contacted to determine whether additional environmental review is required.
- 2) **This Categorical Exclusion expires on December 31, 2024.** If all project work has not been completed by the expiration date, or if the need for an environmental compliance extension is anticipated, RMR's Environment Department must be contacted for an updated environmental review.

- 3) Any injured or orphaned birds and all observed active nests must be immediately reported to the RMR Avian Protection Lead at (970) 593-8803. Any dead birds must be reported to the RMR Avian Protection Lead within twenty-four (24) hours of discovery. Additional documentation, such as photographs and GPS coordinates, may be requested to support RMR's reporting requirements to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- 4) If any cultural resources are inadvertently discovered during implementation of the proposed action, work within 100 feet of the discovery area must halt immediately, and an RMR Archaeologist must be contacted immediately at (970) 302-4753 or (970) 286-3523. Work in the area of discovery must not resume until notification to proceed is provided by an RMR Archaeologist.
- 5) 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 an RMR Archaeologist must be notified immediately at (970) 302-4753 or (970) 286-3523 (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. Work in the area of discovery must not resume until notification to proceed is provided by an RMR Archaeologist.
- 6) To prevent the transport of non-native and invasive plants and animals, including noxious weeds and aquatic nuisance species, work crews must thoroughly wash all vehicles and equipment (trailers, trucks, UTVs, etc.) before entering the action area and working on the project.
- 7) Activities involving the use of fuel, oil, hydraulic fluid, or other petroleum products must comply with RMR's Spill Response Plan (SRP).

C. NUMBER AND TITLE OF THE CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION BEING APPLIED:
(See text in 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D.)

B4.7. Fiber optic cable

D. REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS 10 CFR 1021.410 (b): (See full text in regulation)

The proposed action fits within a class of actions that is listed in Appendix A or B of 10 CFR 1021.

To fit within the classes of actions listed in Appendix B, a proposal must be one that would not: (1) threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of the Department of Energy (DOE) or Executive Orders; (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; (3) disturb hazardous substances; pollutants; contaminants; or Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability



Act (CERCLA)-excluded petroleum and natural gas products that 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, including, but not limited to, those listed in paragraph B(4) of 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B; (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.

There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposal that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal.

The proposal has not been improperly segmented, and 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.

E. DETERMINATION:

Based on my review of information conveyed to me and in my possession (or attached) concerning the proposed action, as NEPA Compliance Officer (as authorized under DOE Order 451.1B), I have determined that the proposed action fits within the specified class(es) of action, the other regulatory requirements set forth above are met, and the proposed action is hereby categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

Signature and Date

James Wood
NEPA Compliance Officer
Rocky Mountain Region
Western Area Power Administration

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