

# **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION**

## **Rocky Mountain Region, Western Area Power Administration**

### **Glendo -Whiterock (115-kV) and Whiterock - Stegall North (115kV)**

#### **Optical Ground Wire Installation, and**

#### **Whiterock - Stegall North (115kV)**

#### **Access Road Maintenance**

### **Scotts Bluff County Nebraska/Goshen and Platte Counties, Wyoming**

*Project Numbers: 2019-046, 2019-058, &2019-085*

*Expiration Date: December 31, 2024*

**A. Brief Description of Proposal:** Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), Rocky Mountain Region (RMR), proposes to replace old optical ground wire (OGW) line with new optical Ground Cable Wire (OPGW). The new OPGW line will be installed between the Glendo (GLD) and Whiterock (WRK) Substations on the Glendo-Whiterock North (GLD-WRK-N) 115kV Transmission Line, and between the Whiterock (WRK) and Stegall (SG) Substations on the Whiterock-Stegall (WRK-SG-N) 115kV Transmission Line. In addition to the OPGW work, WAPA also proposes to conduct routine access road maintenance on existing roads used to access Structures 30/1-31/5, 31/8-34/3, 36/5-36/7, 39/2-Lingle Tap, 57/3-58/6, 64/3-65/2, and 69/2-70/4 on the Whiterock-Stegall (WRK-SG-N) 115kV Transmission Line.

The OPGW will be installed using “pulling sites” positioned within the right-of-way (ROW) along the transmission line. 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. This work will be done using ground crews and through the use of a helicopter. The helicopter must only use preapproved landing zones (LZs). Access road maintenance is allowed in the preapproved mapped areas. Equipment that will be used for this project may include a trailer mounted drilling machine, road grader, dump truck, helicopter and its approved landing zones, bucket trucks, OPGW reel trailer, wire pullers, tensioners, cranes, and work trucks. The OPGW reel trailer will be anchored to the road grader, therefore there will be no ground disturbance at the “pulling sites.”

The access road maintenance will occur on existing roads and may include: blading; grading; removal of rocks and other obstacles impeding safe travel; repair, replacement, and installation of water bars, rip-rap, and other erosion control measures; and cleanout, repair, and replacement of culverts and other drainage features. No new roads will be constructed. Equipment used for this project would include a motor grader, dozer, excavator, skid-steer, and work trucks.

All work will take place on private lands, public lands managed by Bureau of Land Management (BLM), lands managed by the Department of Defense (DOD), and State of Wyoming lands, within WAPA’s existing ROW. The project is located in Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska, as well as Goshen and Platte Counties, in Wyoming, and is part of WAPA’s ongoing program to update and improve its communication systems and access road quality.

### **B. Special Stipulations Pertaining to the 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.

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- 2) **This Categorical Exclusion expires 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 active nest relocations, 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) Transmission line and substation components must be designed and constructed 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
- 5) 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) 286-3523 or (970) 302-4753. Work in the area of discovery must not resume until written notification to proceed is provided by an RMR Archaeologist.
- 6) 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) 286-3523 or (970) 302-4753 (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 written notification to proceed is provided by an RMR Archaeologist.
- 7) Cultural resource avoidance areas are identified on maps to be provided to WAPA's maintenance crews. No earth moving is authorized inside the avoidance area. Additionally, only rubber-treaded tires, no tracked vehicles, are authorized to travel through avoidance areas. Access road maintenance is not allowed within cultural resource avoidance areas. All access for maintenance crews must occur via existing access roads.
- 8) Only in-kind culvert replacement and crossing maintenance is authorized. If culverts or crossings must be placed in new locations, RMR's Environment Department must be contacted to determine whether additional environmental review is required.

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- 9) If rip-rap or other fill must be placed within waters of the United States (within wetland boundaries or below the ordinary high water mark of surface waters), RMR's Environment Department must be contacted to determine whether additional environmental review is required
- 10) 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.
- 11) 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 Part 1021, Subpart D.)

B4.7 Fiber Optic Cable

B1.3 Routine maintenance

**D. 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 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).

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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.

**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.

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Signature and Date

Sean Berry  
Environmental Manager  
Desert Southwest Region  
Western Area Power Administration

Prepared by:  
Scott Morey, Environmental Protection Specialist  
Bill Ankele, Archaeologist

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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>	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>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 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	X		

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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		
(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		