



Department of Energy
Western Area Power Administration
Rocky Mountain Customer Service Region
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**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
WESTERN AREA POWER ADMINISTRATION
ROCKY MOUNTAIN CUSTOMER SERVICE REGION**

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT AND
FLOODPLAIN STATEMENT OF FINDINGS**

**DAVE JOHNSTON TAP-SIDNEY
TRANSMISSION LINE RECONDUCTOR
CONVERSE, GOSHEN, AND PLATTE COUNTIES, WYOMING, AND
CHEYENNE, SCOTTS BLUFF, AND MORRILL COUNTIES, NEBRASKA**

DOE/EA-2149

**AGENCY: U.S. Department of Energy (DOE),
Western Area Power Administration (WAPA)**

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)

SUMMARY:

This FONSI addresses WAPA's proposal for Phase 2 of the Dave Johnson Tap-Glendo-Whiterock-Stegall-Gering-Bridgeport-Sidney (DJT-GLD-WRK-SG-GS-BPT-SD) 115-kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line Reconductor Project (for the purpose of this document, the project will be referred to as DJT-SD). The FONSI summarizes the information WAPA used to determine that the proposed Phase 2 would not have a significant impact on the human environment and would not require preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). WAPA was the lead Federal agency on the environmental assessment (EA) and determined that the Project would not adversely impact the environment.

Purpose and Need for Agency Action:

WAPA needs to improve the way it manages its 210 miles of DJT-SD Transmission Line on public, federal and private lands with the following purposes and objectives:

- To ensure that WAPA can safely and reliably operate and maintain its existing electrical transmission facilities to deliver electrical power.
- To protect public and worker safety.
- To reduce the risk of wildfires caused by transmission line failure and the risk to the facilities from fire.
- To minimize impacts to environmental resources.
- To further WAPA's compliance with North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) reliability standards, industry standards, and WAPA's policies and guidance.
- To ensure that WAPA's transmission facilities remain operational for the useful life of the facilities.
- To ensure that the costs associated with maintaining the transmission system can be controlled following sound business principles, including achieving technical and economic efficiencies to minimize impacts on transmission line tariff costs and electrical power rates.
- To allow flexibility to accommodate changes in transmission system operation and maintenance requirements.
- To maintain sound relationships with landowners and land managers.

Project Description:

The Proposed Action: WAPA proposes to install new conductor (reconductor) on the DJT-SD Transmission Line located in Converse County, Wyoming, east of Casper, Wyoming, running through Plate and Goshen Counties, Wyoming, and Scotts Bluff, Morrill, and Cheyenne Counties, Nebraska. The Project would be broken out into two phases. This FONSI represents approval for Phase 2 and would incorporate the length of transmission line from the Glendo Substation (CAS-GLD Structure 84/8 and CPL-GLD Structure 82/7) to the Dave Johnston Tap Substation (CAS-GLD Structure 34/2C and CPL-GLD Structure 32/2C), and the lines from the Stegall Substation (SG-GS-N Structure 0/1 and SG-GS-S Structure 0/1) to the Sidney Substation (SD-BPT Structure 1) and would take place beginning approximately March 20, 2021. The DJT-SD Transmission Line is approximately 210 miles long with termination points at the Dave Johnson Tap near Casper, Wyoming, and the Sidney Substation near Sidney, Nebraska. The transmission line conductors would be replaced with new conductors, the existing overhead ground wires would be replaced, one with a new fiber optic ground wire (OPGW), and the line would continue to be operated at 115 kV. In addition, a total of 30 existing deteriorated structures would be replaced with "in-kind" new structures. The Project would be confined to the existing rights-of-way (ROW). Additional information on the Proposed Action, no action, and other alternatives is found in chapter 2 of the EA.

Information on transmission line structures, conductors, access roads, and other actions is in chapter 2 of the EA. WAPA would continue to use current access roads and routes for the Project, which would be repaired, if needed, to ensure effective erosion control and access for routine maintenance over the life of the lines. No new access roads or access routes are being proposed.

Alternatives Studied:

The No Action Alternative (Alternative 1): Under this option, WAPA would continue to operate and maintain the transmission lines as they have before. This alternative would not meet the purpose and need of increasing system reliability, which allows for improved flexibility for system operation, or improving the safety and maintainability of the transmission lines.

The Total Rebuild Alternative (Alternative 2): Under this option, WAPA would wreck out the existing lines, grub the ROW vegetation, create a 6-month outage condition, and rebuild the entire line with new materials.

Environmental Consequences:

WAPA's conclusions on the Project's environmental impacts are based on information contained in the EA. The EA is incorporated by reference. Chapter 3, "Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences," contains a summary of the resources that may be affected by the Proposed Action. Resources issues and impact topics evaluated in Chapter 3 include:

- Air Quality
- Geology
- Paleontology
- Water Resources and Floodplains
- Wetlands and other Waters of the United States
- Upland Vegetation
- Soils
- Wildlife
- Threatened, Endangered, and other Special Status Species
- Cultural Resources and Historic Properties
- Land Use
- Visual Resources
- Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice
- Transportation
- Public Health and Safety
- Floodplains

Detailed discussions of the impact analyses for affected resources in the study area are presented in chapter 3, sections 3-2 through 3-16. Impacts of the Proposed Action and the Alternative Actions are compared in these sections. Based on the analysis of the impacts, adoption of identified measures that would reduce impacts, and use of WAPA's standard practices described in Chapter 2, no significant environmental impacts were identified for any of these resources under the Proposed Action. WAPA shall implement specific protective measures during construction and operation to avoid or reduce environmental impacts. Chapter 3 of the EA identifies these protective actions.

Section 7 Discussion: With regards to Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, it was the WAPA Biologist's professional opinion that since the Project would be a replacement in-kind on an existing utility ROW, and would not result in any additional environmental impacts than occurred when the transmission line was constructed 65 years ago or during subsequent ongoing maintenance activities, the Proposed Action would have *No Effect* on the listed species.

Section 106 Discussion: For compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), a Class III Cultural Resource Inventory was conducted. Additionally, WAPA consulted and coordinated, with Tribes, the Bureau of Land Management Casper Field Office, the Bureau of Reclamation-Wyoming Area Office, the National Park Service-Scottsbluff National Monument, the Nebraska State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and the Wyoming SHPO concerning the Class III Inventory. As a result of these consultations, WAPA will avoid any impacts to NHPA sites by avoiding all known cultural resources and, therefore, WAPA has determined a finding of *no historic properties affected*. WAPA will provide cultural avoidance maps to the construction contractor prior to the start of the project.

Floodplain Statement of Findings: As per DOE requirements conducting EAs, a Floodplain Review was conducted as a portion of the EA. The EA contains information that comprises the floodplain assessment required by DOE Compliance with Floodplain and Wetlands Environmental Review Requirements as per Section 404 of the Water Quality Act. Using the latest authoritative information available, WAPA determined that some construction and maintenance actions would occur within 100-year floodplains. These actions would include replacing existing transmission line structures and replacing existing crushed or non-functioning culverts to improve access to the transmission lines, and overland travel across floodplains during construction and maintenance. The floodplains and description of the Proposed Action and alternatives related to them are in Chapter 3 of the EA. They are incorporated by reference into this FONSI. The actions would conform to the applicable floodplain protection standards. The transmission line has been in place for 65 years with no significant adverse effects on the floodplains, the transmission line, or adjacent uses. However, WAPA would minimize potential harm to or within floodplains through the standard construction practices listed in Chapter 2 of the EA and other actions described in Chapter 3. These include minimizing the amount of grading in floodplains, replacement of existing culverts where needed, and appropriate "in-kind" design of replacement structures. Although transmission line structures could collect flood

debris around their bases during a flood event, they are far enough apart that there would be no impediment to flood flows, and would not, therefore, increase the risk of flooding through damming flood flows. WAPA will also design structures in floodplains to withstand flood flows and debris accumulations and remove collected flood debris during normal annual operations and maintenance (O&M). Only in-kind culvert replacement and crossing maintenance is authorized. There would be no floodplain effects of national or regional concern associated with the Project. The Proposed Action would Not Effect the existing floodplain based on the review conducted.

Wetlands: Existing access roads and routes that are located in wetlands would not be used to access structures, avoiding impacts to wetlands. Any structures that are located in wetlands and must be replaced shall be replaced “in-kind,” the poles shall be pulled, and the new poles placed in the original holes. Vegetation may be mowed or cut in wetlands as long as roots and stumps are left intact and no grubbing is conducted. No soil placement or removal shall take place within any wetlands. The Proposed Action would Not Effect the existing wetlands based on the review conducted.

COPIES OF THE FINAL EA AND FONSI ARE AVAILABLE FROM:

Mr. Jim Wood
J0400 Environmental Manager
Rocky Mountain Region
Western Area Power Administration
5555 East Crossroads Avenue
Loveland, CO 80538

The EA and FONSI can be downloaded from WAPA's website at:

<http://ww2.wapa.gov/sites/WAPA/transmission/infrastructure/Pages/Davejohnston-SidneyEA.aspx>

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE DOE NEPA PROCESS CONTACT:

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DETERMINATION:

This FONSI was prepared in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 40 CFR § 1508.13; DOE NEPA Implementing Procedures, 10 CFR § 1021.322.

Based on the information presented in the EA, including implementing the described protective measures, WAPA determined that its proposal to reconductor the DJT-SD Transmission Line does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of the NEPA. Therefore, an EIS is not required, and WAPA is issuing this FONSI for Phase 2 of the Project.

Issued in Loveland, Colorado on 03/12/2021

Signature

Jack D. Murray
Acting Senior Vice President and
Rocky Mountain Regional Manager
Western Area Power Administration