

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION



Western Area
Power Administration
Rocky Mountain Region

Proposed Action Title: Walden-Muddy Pass 69-kV Transmission Line Decommissioning

Location: Jackson County, Colorado

Project Number: 2022-092

Expiration Date: December 31, 2028

A. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION:

Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), Rocky Mountain Region (RMR), proposes to decommission and remove the Walden-Muddy Pass (WDN-MPS) 69-kV Transmission Line located in Jackson County, Colorado. The 31.4-mile WDN-MPS line, built in 1957, is composed of 386 wood single pole structures, 32 wood H-frame structures, and 2 take-off structures. To decommission and remove the line, crews will first remove the conductor by cutting it at intervals and detaching it from the structures. The detached conductor will be pulled onto spools for transportation and disposal. Most structures will then be removed by cutting the wood poles off at the ground surface, loading the wood poles onto trailers, and hauling the wood poles out of the area; some wood poles may be flown out by helicopter. WAPA may leave select wood poles standing or may completely remove wood poles from the ground if required by specific landowners. If structures are completely removed, the structure holes will be refilled and compacted for safety purposes. Existing access roads and overland access will be used to reach the transmission line; no access road maintenance or new road construction will occur. Vehicles and equipment used for the line removal may include bucket trucks, truck-mounted cranes, skid-steer loaders, utility trucks, pole trailers, equipment trailers, and helicopters. Work will be confined to WAPA's ROWs on private lands, public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and Colorado State Trust Lands (STL). Once the WDN-MPS line has been completely removed, WAPA will work with landowners to abandon ROWs.

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, 2028.** 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) **The Environmental Restrictions Area (ERA) maps provided to WAPA's maintenance crews include cultural resource boundaries.** No ground disturbance is allowed within these cultural resource boundaries. All access within these cultural resource boundaries must be limited to existing access roads. If ground disturbance within these cultural resource boundaries is necessary, an RMR Archeologist must be contacted at (970) 302-4753 or (970) 286-3523. No ground disturbance within these cultural resource boundaries is authorized until written notification to proceed is provided by an RMR Archeologist.

- 4) **Structures 0/7 to 1/7, 1/12 to 2/6, 2/12 to 7/1, 7/5 to 7/6, 8/1 to 13/10, 15/1 to 15/2, 15/5 to 18/4, 18/13 to 19/9, 29/10 to 30/5, and 30/8 to 30/9 are located within greater sage-grouse habitat.** Work at these structures must be avoided between March 1 and July 15 to avoid disturbance to breeding and nesting greater sage-grouse on BLM, STL, and USFWS lands. No restrictions exist for work between July 16 and February 28.
- 5) Any injured or orphaned birds and all observed active nests must be immediately reported to RMR Environment at (970) 593-8803 or (970) 342-6462. Any dead birds must be reported to RMR Environment 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.
- 6) If any cultural resources are inadvertently discovered during implementation of the project, 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.
- 7) If any possible human remains are inadvertently discovered during implementation of the project, 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.
- 8) Vehicles and equipment (trailers, trucks, UTVs, etc.) will not be moved between work areas without first taking reasonable measures to ensure they are free of soil, seeds, vegetation matter, or other debris that could contain noxious weed seeds.
- 9) 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.)

B4.10 Removal of electric transmission facilities

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, Regional Environmental Manager
Rocky Mountain Region
Western Area Power Administration

Prepared by:

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