

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW FOR CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION

Rocky Mountain Region, Western Area Power Administration

Hesperus-Montrose (Project No. 3) 345-kV Transmission Line and Curecanti-Lost Canyon 230-kV Transmission Line Routine Maintenance of Right-of-Way Roads La Plata, Montezuma, Dolores, San Miguel, and Montrose Counties, Colorado

- A. Brief Description of Proposal:** Western Area Power Administration (Western) proposes to perform routine maintenance of existing access road and right-of-way (ROW) roads along the Hesperus-Montrose (HSP-MTR) 345-kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line located between Montrose and Norwood, Colorado. The project will provide safe access to transmission line structures 0 to 194 (approximately 110 miles). Also, Western proposes to perform routine maintenance between structures 40/1 to 59/5 of the Curecanti-Lost Canyon (CCI-LCN) 230-kV Transmission Line. The CCI-LCN line parallels the HSP-MTR line at structures 40/1 to 59/5 (approximately 19.7 miles). All work will be confined to Western's ROW easement. Existing access roads would be used, no new roads are proposed. The road maintenance equipment utilized would be rubber-tired motor grader, track dozer, backhoe, dump truck, and a skid steer loader. The project is located on private, U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands in Montrose County, Colorado.

The proposed routine maintenance actions include following:

- 1) Access road grading and improvements. A rubber-tired motor grader and/or a track dozer would grade and improve sections of the access road to create a smooth surface, safe for bucket truck travel.
- 2) Drainage systems. Inspect, repair, and remove sediment from water bars, roadway and borrow ditches. Debris will be spread on existing access roads.
- 3) Culverts. Installed, replaced or repair damaged culverts and remove sediment from culverts.
- 4) Transmission structure landings. Maintenance crews would construct pads as needed and remove the loose material from the structure concrete pads.
- 5) Gate repair. The need to repair or replace existing gates would be determined on site.
- 6) Brush clearing. Minor clearing of brush and trees close to the structures and blocking access road.

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

B1.3. Routine Maintenance.

Routine maintenance activities and custodial services for buildings, **structures, rights-of-way, infrastructures (including, but not limited to, pathways, roads, and railroads)**, vehicles and equipment, and **localized vegetation** and pest control, during which operations may be suspended and resumed, provided that the activities would be conducted in a manner in accordance with applicable requirements. Custodial services are activities to preserve facility appearance, working conditions, and sanitation (such as cleaning, window washing, lawn mowing, trash collection, painting, and snow removal). Routine maintenance activities, corrective (that is, repair), preventive, and predictive, are required to maintain and preserve buildings, structures, infrastructures, and equipment in a condition suitable for a facility to be used for its designated purpose. Such maintenance may occur as a result of severe weather (such as hurricanes, floods, and tornados), wildfires, and other such events. Routine maintenance may result in replacement to the extent that replacement is in-kind and is not a substantial upgrade or improvement.

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In-kind replacement includes installation of new components to replace outmoded components, provided that the replacement does not result in a significant change in the expected useful life, design capacity, or function of the facility.

Routine maintenance does not include replacement of a major component that significantly extends the originally intended useful life of a facility (for example, it does not include the replacement of a reactor vessel near the end of its useful life). Routine maintenance activities include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Repair or replacement of facility equipment, such as lathes, mills, pumps, and presses;
- (b) Door and window repair or replacement;
- (c) Wall, ceiling, or floor repair or replacement;
- (d) Reroofing;
- (e) Plumbing, electrical utility, lighting, and telephone service repair or replacement;
- (f) Routine replacement of high-efficiency particulate air filters;
- (g) Inspection and/or treatment of currently installed utility poles;
- (h) **Repair of road embankments;**
- (i) Repair or replacement of fire protection sprinkler systems;
- (j) **Road** and parking area resurfacing, including construction of temporary access to facilitate resurfacing, **and scraping and grading of unpaved surfaces;**
- (k) **Erosion control and soil stabilization measures** (such as reseeding, gabions, grading, and revegetation);
- (l) Surveillance and maintenance of surplus facilities in accordance with DOE Order 35.1, "Radioactive Waste Management," or its successor;
- (m) Repair and maintenance of transmission facilities, such as replacement of conductors of the same nominal voltage, poles, circuit breakers, transformers, capacitors, crossarms, insulators, and downed powerlines, in accordance, where appropriate, with 40 CFR part 761 ("Polychlorinated Biphenyls Manufacturing, Processing, Distribution in Commerce, and Use Prohibitions") or its successor;
- (n) Routine testing and calibration of facility components, subsystems, or portable equipment (such as control valves, in-core monitoring devices, transformers, capacitors, monitoring wells, lysimeters, weather stations, and flumes);
- (o) Routine decontamination of the surfaces of equipment, rooms, hot cells, or other interior surfaces of buildings (by such activities as wiping with rags, using strippable latex, and minor vacuuming), and removal of contaminated intact equipment and other materials (not including spent nuclear fuel or special nuclear material in nuclear reactors); and
- (p) **Removal of debris.**

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.

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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). 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:

If the scope of work of this project changes, Western’s Environmental Division must be contacted for additional environmental review.

This Categorical Exclusion is valid only from signature date through the end of calendar year 2013. If routine maintenance has not commenced within that time, Western’s Environmental Division must be contacted for an updated environmental review prior to routine maintenance.

Routine maintenance activities shall be conducted to minimize scarring, or defacing of the natural surroundings in the vicinity of the work. Limit movement of construction crews and equipment within the maintenance corridor, including access routes, to minimize damage beyond the ROW corridor. Except where terrain damage results from trenching activity and where clearing is required for the maintenance of roads. Terrain and vegetation shall be preserved and protected from damage by maintenance crew operations and equipment. If operations or equipment causes terrain damage, the maintenance crew repairs the damage.

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If any cultural materials are discovered during construction, work in the area shall halt immediately, Western's Regional Preservation Officer shall be contacted, and the material be evaluated by an archaeologist or historian meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards (48 FR 22716, Sept. 1983).

There will be no blading of access roads located within sensitive environmental sites identified on GIS maps for the HSP-MTR 345-kV and CCI-LCN 230-kV Transmission Lines and associated access roads. Environmentally sensitive areas that are to be avoided can be referenced on the maps that are provided to the maintenance lead.

Contact Environment thirty (30) days prior to initiation of the project so that they may arrange for an on-site archeological monitor to be present in advance of the maintenance crews to ensure that the environmentally sensitive areas would be avoided.

Gunnison County initiated a Gunnison sage-grouse conservation program, following the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designation of the Gunnison sage-grouse as Candidate species for threatened or endangered status under the Endangered Species Act. Gunnison County, USFS, and the BLM have identified road closures to protect Gunnison sage-grouse during their mating season. The roads would be closed from March 15 through June 30, 2013. **For additional road closure information, contact the Gunnison County Public Works at (970) 641-0044, the Gunnison County Wildlife Conservation Coordinator at (970) 641-7604, BLM at (970) 642-4940, or USFS at (970) 641-0471.**

Sensitive Areas for the Gunnison sage-grouse have been identified between Structures 109, 110, 111, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, and 140. Occupied Proposed Critical Habitat are between structures 108 to 111, 134 to 140, and 154 to 167 along the HSP-MTR and HSP-LCN lines. No maintenance action shall occur between these structures during Gunnison Sage Grouse mating season (March 15 through June 30).

In accordance with the disturbance guidelines listed in the 2005 Gunnison Sage-Grouse Range wide Conservation Plan, the proposed vegetation treatments will also adhere to the following stipulations:

- 1. Work cannot begin in the area indicated on the enclosed maps of Gunnison Sage-Grouse avoidance areas until after June 30, 2013.*
- 2. Sagebrush, mountain shrub, and riparian/meadow areas will not be disturbed in these areas.*
- 3. To avoid noise disturbance in adjacent habitats when hens with broods are most active, motorized or non-motorized project activities will be restricted from ½ hour before sunrise to 2 hours after sunrise; and 1 hour before sunset to sunset in these areas.*
- 4. Activities will be confined to existing routes and rights of way (especially through the riparian/wet meadow zone).*
- 5. No new roads will be built as part of this project.*

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To comply with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, maintenance work will be scheduled outside the March 1 through July 31 general nesting period; if the maintenance work is to be done during March 1 through July 31, contact Environment so that they may arrange for a pedestrian survey to be conducted in advance of the maintenance crews to identify active nests that are to be avoided.

All work will be conducted using existing access roads and no wetlands, brooks, rivers, creeks and/or streams shall be disturbed.

Western would implement standard best management practices for erosion, seeding, and noxious weed control. All equipment used should be cleaned prior to use in the area to prevent transporting of invasive plant or noxious weed seeds.

- E. Determination:** Based on my review of information provided to me and in my possession concerning the proposed action, I 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

Date: 4/26/13

Gene Iley, Jr.
NEPA Compliance Officer
Rocky Mountain Customer Service Region
Western Area Power Administration

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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

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, 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		
(4) Have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources. An environmentally sensitive resource is typically a resource that has been	X		

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<p>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>			
<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 658.2(a), —Farmland Protection Policy Act: Definitions, or its successor;</p>	X		

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(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		