



Categorical Exclusion Determination

Western Area Power Administration

U.S. Department of Energy



<u>Proposed Action Title:</u>	Airport-Whitney 115-kV Transmission Line Interconnection Delivery Point Request
<u>WAPA Region:</u>	Rocky Mountain
<u>Location (County/State):</u>	Weld County, Colorado
<u>CX Determination Number:</u>	2026-RMR-003 (RMR Project Number: 2025-028)
<u>CX Determination Expiration Date*:</u>	December 31, 2030

**CX is valid until the date above (no longer than five years from when document was signed) or completion of work started prior to the expiration of the CX Determination, unless there are substantial changes to the scope of work, location, or applicable regulations. If such changes occur prior to the expiration of the CX, the Region Environmental Program will review the analysis to ensure the CX is still applicable.*

Proposed Action Description:

Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), Rocky Mountain Region (RMR) proposes to approve an interconnection Delivery Point (DP) request from Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc.'s (Tri-State) on WAPA's existing Airport-Whitney 115-kV Transmission Line in Weld County, Colorado. The request allows transfer of existing load from WAPA's existing Windsor and Airport Substations to Tri-State's new Iron Mountain Substation to mitigate loading of the existing substations and provide improved reliability.

A System Impact Study was performed by Tri-State (June 14, 2023) which evaluated the impacts of the Iron Mountain Substation. WAPA conducted a Facility Study for the proposed interconnection DP request in May 2024. Results from both studies confirmed that only minor modifications to WAPA's existing infrastructure are needed to accommodate Tri-State's request.

Implementation of the proposed action involves the installation of two new transmission line structures (structure numbers 17-7A and 17-7B) within WAPA's existing Airport-Whitney 115-kV Transmission Line right-of-way (ROW). The new structures will serve as the interconnection DP for the Iron Mountain Substation and will be installed between structure numbers 17-7 and 18-1 on the Airport-Whitney 115-kV Transmission Line. For added stability, the ROW will be expanded to the south to accommodate one new guy wire. The full scope of the structure installations includes auguring new structure holes, installing the new wood structures, and installing new hardware to accommodate the interconnection DP. All staging areas and laydown yards related to the installation of the new structures will be within the Airport-Whitney 115-kV Transmission Line ROW.

Equipment used for the proposed action may include bucket trucks, truck-mounted augers and cranes, skid-steer loaders, utility trucks, pole trailers, and equipment trailers. All work will be completed within the Airport-Whitney 115-kV Transmission Line ROW on private lands. The ROW will be accessed by existing access routes; no access road maintenance or new access road construction is authorized. All work will be completed prior to the expiration date of this CX.

Environmental Requirements during Project Implementation:



- 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, 2030.** 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 RMR Environment at (970) 342-6462 or (970) 473-5586. 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.
- 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, (970) 286-3523, or (970) 658-6794. 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, (970) 286-3523, or (970) 658-6794 (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) 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.
- 7) Activities involving the use of fuel, oil, hydraulic fluid, or other petroleum products must comply with RMR's Spill Response Plan (SRP).
- 8) 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.

Categorical Exclusion(s) Applied (Number and Title):

B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities

B4.8 Electricity transmission agreements



B4.9 Multiple use of powerline rights-of-way

B4.11 Electric power substations and interconnection facilities

Findings:

For the DOE procedures regarding categorical exclusions, including the full text of each categorical exclusion, see 10 CFR 1021.102 and Appendix B to [10 CFR Part 1021](#), and also Section 5.4 (Applying one or more categorical exclusions to a proposal) and Appendices B and C of [DOE's National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures](#) (Jun. 30, 2025).

Requirements and guidance in 10 CFR 1021.102 and DOE's NEPA Implementing Procedures: (See full text in regulation and in Implementing Procedures)

- ☒ The proposal fits within a class of actions that is listed in Appendix B to 10 CFR Part 1021 or Appendix B or C of DOE's NEPA Implementing Procedures (June 30, 2025).
To fit within the classes of actions listed in Appendix B to 10 CFR Part 1021, or Appendix B of DOE's NEPA Implementing Procedures, a proposal must satisfy the conditions that are integral elements of the classes of actions in Appendix B of both 10 CFR Part 1021 and DOE's NEPA Implementing Procedures. Additionally, for CXs adopted pursuant to NEPA Section 109 (see DNIP, Appendix C), the originating Federal agency's integral elements or extraordinary circumstances must be in accordance with the applicable requirements.
- ☒ There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposal that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal. DOE or an applicant may modify the proposal to avoid reasonably foreseeable adverse significant effects such that the categorical exclusion would apply.
- ☒ The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion.

[Note: For proposals that fit within the categorical exclusions listed in Appendix C of DOE's NEPA Implementing Procedures, see DOE's notice of adoption for the subject Appendix C categorical exclusion for additional considerations. DOE notices of adoption for other agency categorical exclusions may be found on [DOE's Section 109 webpage](#).]

Determination:

Based on my review of the proposed action, I have determined that the proposed action fits within the specified class(es) of action, the other requirements and guidance set forth above are met, and the proposed action is hereby categorically excluded from further NEPA review.



WAPA Authorized Official Signature:

Barton V. Barnhart
Senior Vice President and
Rocky Mountain Regional Manager