



Categorical Exclusion Determination

Western Area Power Administration

U.S. Department of Energy



Proposed Action Title:	Path 15 Turnbuckle Repairs and Helicopter Landing Zones
WAPA Region:	Sierra Nevada Region
Location (County/State):	Fresno County, California
CX Determination Number:	2026-SNR-007
CX Determination Expiration Date*:	12/31/2027

**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:

WAPA proposes to acquire temporary access rights from willing private landowners for three areas and temporary access permissions from the U.S. Bureau of Land Management for one area outside of its existing Los Banos-Gates #3 ("Path 15") transmission line right-of-way to be used temporarily as helicopter landing zones for a transmission line maintenance project. These landing zones would benefit WAPA due to their ease of access and greater safety (by reducing aircraft operations in close proximity to transmission lines). Limits or restrictions on use would be determined in negotiation with the landowners or land managers and would be in addition to and in accordance with any environmental restrictions. A one-project term for the contracts/permits is proposed, with work anticipated in July-2026. This determination considers anticipated effects through 2027 in case the project schedule slips.

Sites chosen are disturbed areas or grassland adjacent to or on access roads. No grading, modification, or improvement of the sites or routes used to access them would occur. WAPA would use these landing zones to support turnbuckle adjustments, a routine transmission line maintenance project. Typical use at the sites consists of staging equipment, parking vehicles, loading of cargo (including internal or external sling loads), and refueling of helicopters. For this effort, personnel would be flown to the towers that need work, at which time the helicopter would return to the landing zone to stage. During this down time, the helicopter may refuel, as the work sites are distant from aviation fuel stations. When the work is complete, the worker would be retrieved by the helicopter. Time at any landing zone is expected to be less than two hours, and support vehicles are expected to be 2-3 large pickups plus one fuel trailer. Landing zone sites (including room for equipment staging and vehicle turnaround) vary in size, with one acre being a reasonable upper end estimate for affected area. Fuel service trailers are of a design and size that do not require HAZMAT endorsement, and on-site passive spill containment exceeds the capacity of the fuel service trailers.

This CX evaluates activities outside existing transmission line rights-of-way and the use of temporary license agreements to secure temporary property rights, as well as the maintenance work on the existing towers.



Environmental Requirements during Project Implementation:

- A biological survey is required if landing zones are used during nesting season (March 1-August 15, consistent with conservation measures in the Environmental Assessment for Right-of-Way Maintenance in the San Joaquin Valley, California).
- At site 38/4, crews will be restricted to stay on the existing access road and not use this site for refueling.
- WAPA would employ spill containment standard operating procedures (SOPs) consistent with the Environmental Assessment for Right-of-Way Maintenance in the San Joaquin Valley, California.
- WAPA would employ air quality SOPs consistent with the Environmental Assessment for Right-of-Way Maintenance in the San Joaquin Valley, California.

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

B1.3 Routine maintenance

B1.24 Property transfers

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](#) (July 13, 2026).

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.

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:

Title: Sierra Nevada Region Environmental Manager