Categorical Exclusion Determination
Western Area Power Administration
U.S. Department of Energy

Proposed Action Title:	Ordway to Groton South Pole Replacements
WAPA Region:	Upper Great Plains
Location (County/State):	Brown County, South Dakota
CX Determination Number:	2026-UGP-011
CX Determination Expiration Date*:	10/20/2031

**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:

Ordway to Groton South 115kV Transmission Line across the James River requires rebuilding the line between structures 105/2 to 106/4 due to water damage. A contractor will conduct the work within WAPA's existing Right of Way. Damaged leaning wood structures will be removed. Steel monopole structures will be installed on raised foundations in new locations along the same line reducing the total number of structures passing through the floodplain. Final design plans will be determined after GeoTech is completed. The ground will be restored to existing conditions post construction. The ROW will be accessed by existing access routes; no access road maintenance or new road construction is authorized. USACE permit will be secured after the environmental review, before the project construction. Construction is anticipated to begin August 2027 and will take approximately a year to complete.

Environmental Requirements during Project Implementation:

- Before construction begins, WAPA must complete coordination with USACE and obtain permits and/or approvals, as necessary.
- Follow the Endangered Species restrictions during construction:
- WAPA would conduct the project within its existing ROWs. If work must be done on public lands or existing conservation easements, WAPA must obtain necessary permits/permissions first.
- WAPA would avoid actions ≤ 660 feet from active bald eagle nests and ≤ ½ mile from active golden eagle nests. Actions in these buffers would occur during portions of the year when eggs, eaglets, and/or breeding adults aren't present on the nest (usually September 1 – January 14); or when a biological monitor is present to monitor the nest and ensure WAPA's activities won't cause undue disturbance to the nest/young/adults. If WAPA replaces a structure within the buffer distances above, WAPA would adhere to the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee's (APLIC) Suggested Practices for Avian Protection on Power Lines6 to make the structure eagle-safe, when practicable.

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- If a Migratory Bird Treaty Act species' nest is observed prior to or during the action, a suitable buffer would be established to avoid nest disturbance, and actions would not commence in the buffer until:
  A) the nest fate is reached naturally;
  B) a biological monitor is present to monitor the nest to ensure WAPA's actions are not causing undue disturbance to the nest/young/adults; or
  C) outside the primary nesting season dates (May 1 – August 1).
- To reduce the risk of birds colliding with the t-line, WAPA would install & maintain line markers (i.e., bird flight diverters) in accordance with the APLIC guidance, on spans & guyed structures from 104/7 to 107/1 (17 total spans) if they're part of the rebuild. See attached images.
- If tree removal is needed, it would occur outside the northern long-eared bat pupping season (pupping season is June 1 – August 15).
- If WAPA observes a piping plover or rufa red knot at any point < 100 meters from the project, project actions would cease immediately and delay until the plover or red knot moves off naturally, or the USFWS had been consulted to determine when project actions may resume.
- It is recommended that WAPA avoid impacts to intact grasslands to the extent practicable. If practicable, please site staging areas, landing pads, etc. in areas of previously disturbed soils (i.e., existing croplands, roads, substations, etc.).

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

B4.13 Upgrading and rebuilding existing powerlines

B3.1 Site characterization and environmental monitoring

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:

GAYLE NANSEL Digitally signed by GAYLE NANSEL
Date: 2026.10.30 10:08:49 -06'00'

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Senior Vice President and Upper Great Plains Regional Manager

Bird Diverters:

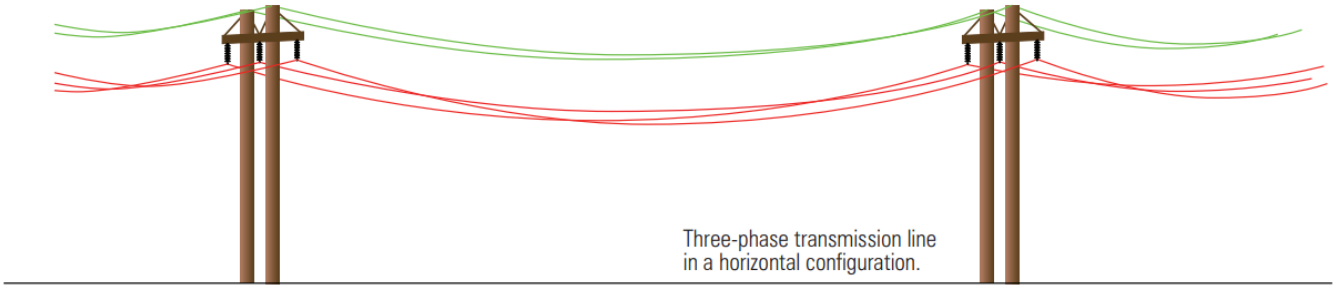


Preferred Line Marker Styles to Select From:

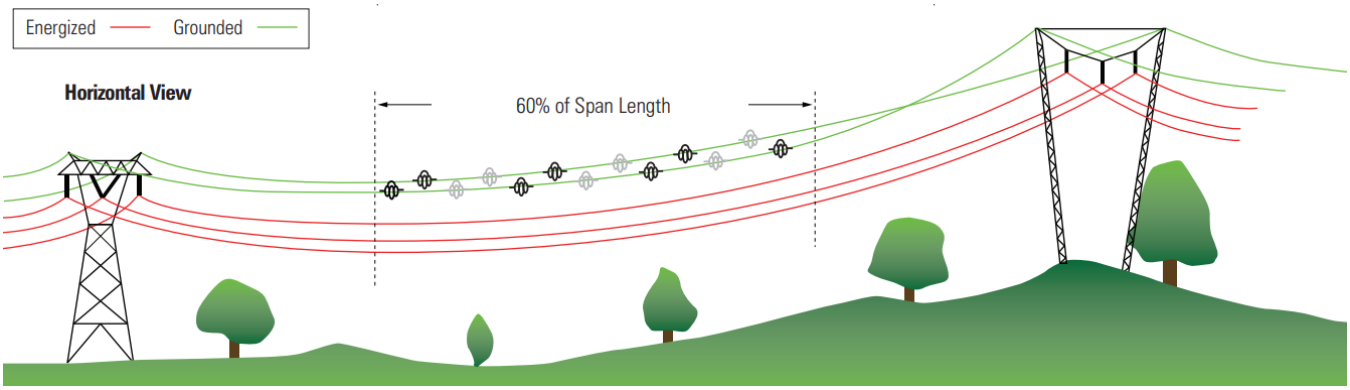
- Tents
  Power Line Sentry's Hawk Eye Bird Flight Diverter.
- Coils
  Preformed Line Product's Swan-Flight Diverter. The larger swan-flight diverters should be used to increase visibility, not the smaller bird-flight diverters.
- Clamps - not recommended on fiber/optical ground wires (OPGW) as they may void warranties.
  P&R Tech's FireFly HW (High Wind) Bird Diverter

TE Connectivity's Dynamic Avian Flight Diverter High Contrast Reflective.

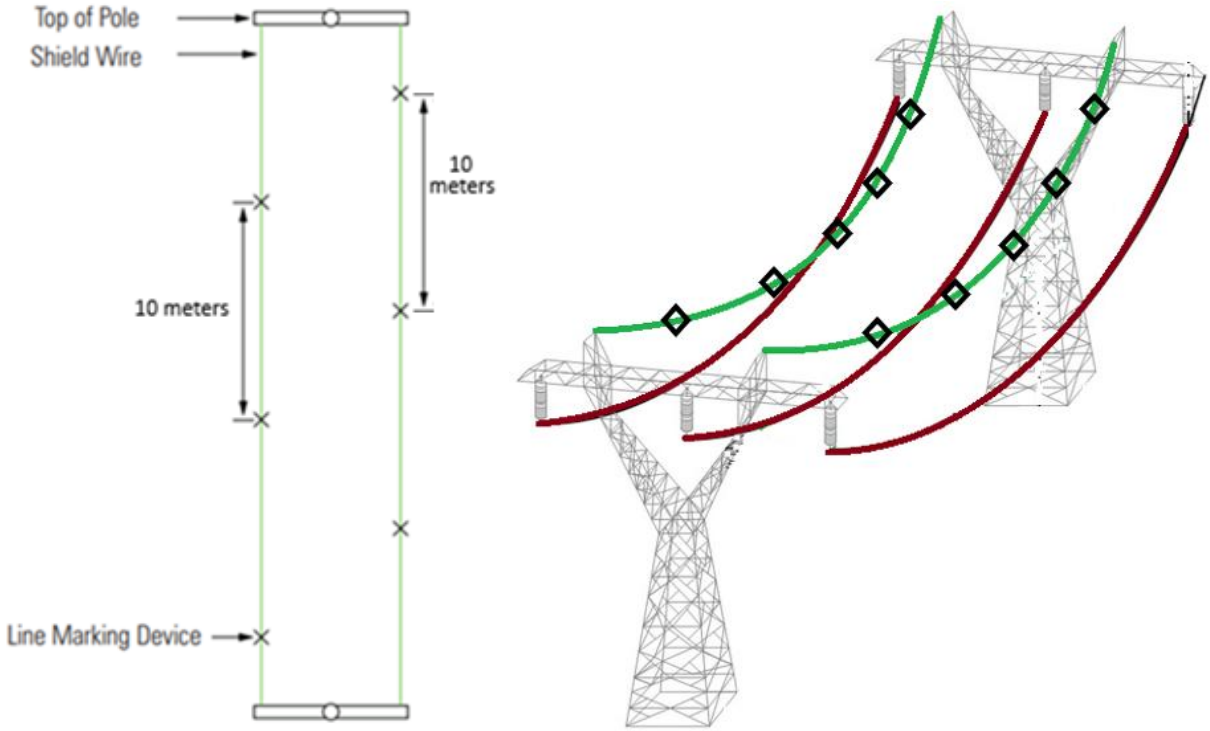
All line markers must be placed on the top-most lines in the span (green).



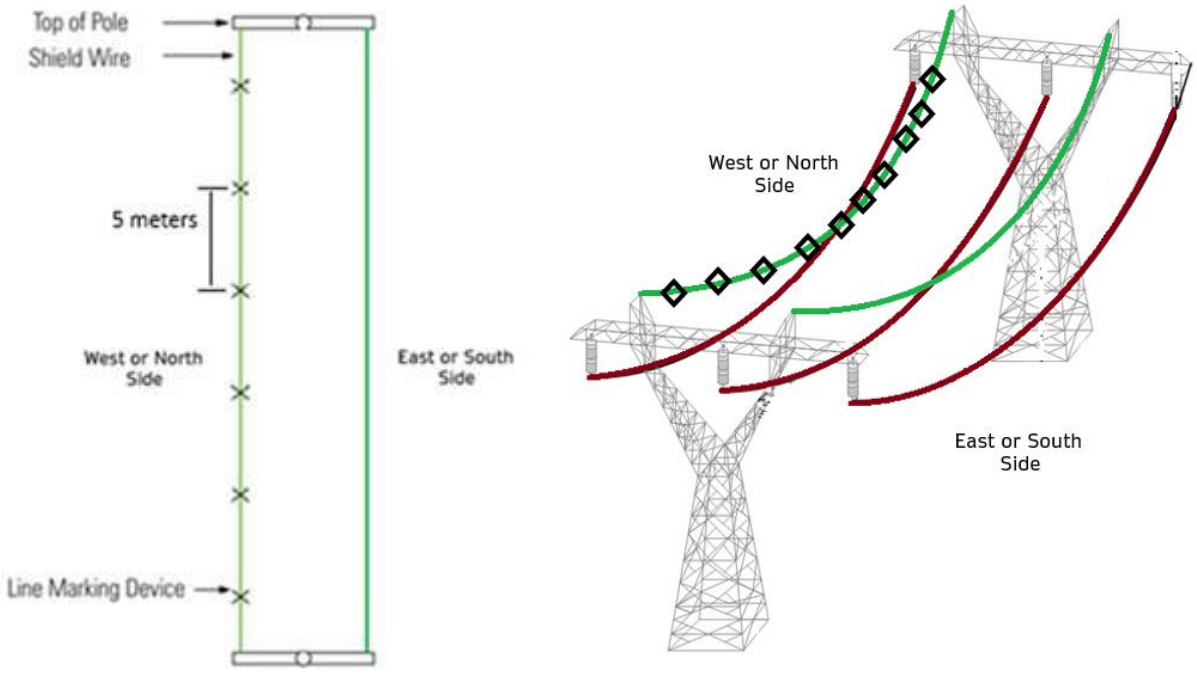
Markers must, at minimum, be placed in the central 60% of each span:



Preferred views of how to place line markers on all lines. *Note: markers are offset, so when viewed on a horizontal plane the markers appear to have a 5-meter spacing. Spacing may be adjusted to align with manufacturer's specific spacing recommendations*.



Alternate view #1 of acceptable marker placements if concerns exist regarding placement of line markers on OPGW, or other potential engineering concerns. *Note: spacing may be adjusted to align with manufacturer's specific spacing recommendations*.



Alternate view #2 of acceptable marker placements if concerns exist regarding placement of line markers on OPGW, or other potential engineering concerns. *Note: spacing may be adjusted to align with manufacturer's specific spacing recommendations*.

