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

Proposed Action Title:	Captain Jack-Olinda Off ROW Hazard Trees
WAPA Region:	Sierra Nevada Region
Location (County/State):	Modoc, Siskiyou, Shasta Counties, California
CX Determination Number:	2026-SNR-013
CX Determination Expiration Date*:	12/31/2028

**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, Sierra Nevada Region (WAPA) is responsible for the operation and maintenance of several federally owned and operated transmission lines throughout California, including the Captain Jack-Olinda (CPJ-ODA) 500-kV transmission line located in Modoc, Siskiyou, and Shasta Counties, California. This responsibility includes maintaining transmission line clearances and reliable access to towers and related facilities in compliance with the National Electric Safety Code, Western Electricity Coordinating Council (WECC) standards, and WAPA directives to protect public safety and ensure transmission system reliability.

To fulfill these requirements, WAPA proposes to remove up to 659 hazard trees located outside, but adjacent to, the CPJ-ODA transmission line right of way (off-ROW). The underlying lands are managed by the U.S. Forest Service (Modoc and Shasta-Trintiy National Forests) or held by private landowners. Prior to initiating work, WAPA will secure all required authorizations from the U.S. Forest Service and provide advanced notifications to affected private landowners.

In accordance with WAPA Order 450.3C and North American Electric Reliability Council (NERC) Standard FAC-003, WAPA is required to manage vegetation that threatens system reliability. To minimize environmental disturbance, WAPA applied specific danger tree assessment criteria, strictly restricting removals to dead, dying, severely diseased, structurally compromised, or leaning trees with high probability of striking the transmission conductors, tower, or access infrastructure.

Trees will be felled manually using existing access roads. Directional felling will guide trees away from active water channels, stream banks, and riparian corridors (with particular emphasis on the Pit River crossing at spans 459-460). Felled trees will be left on site. Limbs and slash will be chipped and broadcast or lopped and scattered to a maximum depth of 12-inches. Tree felling is scheduled to begin in November, with primary work targeted for completion during the late fall/winter months. Work will adhere to the environmental requirements detailed below.

Environmental Requirements during Project Implementation:

Project activities will be conducted in accordance with established Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Project Conservation Measures (PCMs), adopted from WAPA's North Area Environmental Assessment for Operations and Maintenance Activities. While the proposed hazard tree removals occur off-ROW, WAPA is applying these standard measures to ensure resource protection consistency across the transmission corridor.

Cultural Resources

- An archaeological monitor is required in designated sensitive work areas prior to and/or during ground-disturbing and tree-felling activities. Prior to work commencing, SNR Environmental will coordinate directly with vegetation staff and provide project-specific mapping/instructions delineating where monitoring is required.
- If cultural or paleontological materials are identified during implementation, halt work within a 100-foot buffer of the discovery and contact the SNR Archaeologist immediately

Biological Resources

Work is expected to occur outside of nesting season for Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) and other migratory birds covered under Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA). If work continues beyond January 1st, nesting surveys will be required and implemented as needed. Work will be completed using existing access roads and off-road travel will be avoided. With adherence to the following PCMs, there will be no adverse effects to federally threatened and endangered species.

- MBTA: B-SOP-12 applies: To protect nesting birds (birds not specifically protected by PCMs but protected by the MBTA), whose nests could occur within the ROW, Western and its subcontractors will perform Category B and C Operations and Maintenance (O&M) activities outside the nesting season, which runs from Jan 1st through September 15th in the Redding/Trinity and Round Mountain/Modoc regions. Alternatively, a qualified biologist will conduct nesting-bird surveys prior to project activities. For special-status birds, specific PCMs apply.
    - An additional survey may be required if gaps between the survey and the project activity exceed three weeks.
    - Should an active nest be discovered, the qualified biologist will establish an appropriate buffer zone (in which O&M activity is not allowed) to avoid disturbance in the vicinity of the nest. Maintenance activities will not take place until the biologist has determined that the nestlings have fledged or that maintenance activities will not adversely affect adults or newly fledged young.
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- NSO: PCM-BO79 applies: From February 1 to August 31 herbicide application (with the exception of direct application), tree removal, and any noisy or disturbing O&M activities (e.g., chain saw, mechanical chipper) will be prohibited. O&M activities that only require the use of hand tools and pickup trucks are allowable within this time frame.

If O&M activities need to be conducted between February 1 and August 31st, a Service approved biologist will conduct protocol nest surveys using methods described in CDFG 1992 (or the most current survey protocol) under guidance of US Fish and Wildlife Service.
If a nest is detected, the US Fish and Wildlife Service will be contacted for further guidance.

- Bald Eagles: PCM-B070 applies: From February 1 to August 15 herbicide application or noisy or disturbing O&M activities (e.g., power saws, mechanical chippers) will be prohibited anywhere that bald eagles are known to nest OR a qualified biologist will conduct nesting surveys. If a nest is detected, all herbicide application and O&M activities will be prohibited at a distance determined by the qualified biologist, based on
topography and/or other environmental considerations

Water Resources (Seep, Spring, Pond, Lake, River, Stream, and Marsh):

WR-SOP-1 Non-biodegradable debris will not be deposited in the ROW.
WR-SOP-2 Run-off from project worksites will be controlled and will meet the State Water Resources Control Board storm water requirements.
WR-SOP-3 Vehicles will be inspected daily for fluid leaks before leaving the staging area.
WR-SOP-4 Equipment will be stored, fueled, and maintained in a vehicle staging area 300 feet or the maximum distance possible from any seep, spring, pond, lake, river, stream, marsh, or their associated habitats.
WR-SOP-6 When feasible, all maintenance activities will be routed around wet areas while ensuring that the route does not cross sensitive resource areas.
WR-SOP-7 The following activities are prohibited at all times within 100 feet of a seep, spring, pond, lake, river, stream, or marsh, and their associated habitats:
  - Vehicle access, except on existing access and maintenance roads
  - Dumping, stockpiling, or burying of any material
  - Mixing of pesticides, herbicides, or other potentially toxic chemicals
  - Open petroleum products

Air Resources:

AQ-SOP-1 Western will adhere to all requirements of those agencies having jurisdiction over air quality matters, and any necessary permits for operation and maintenance will be obtained.
AQ-SOP-2 Machinery and vehicles will be kept in good operating condition and older equipment will be replaced with equipment meeting more stringent California emission standards; appropriate emissions-control equipment will be maintained for vehicles and equipment, per California, EPA, and Western air-emission requirements.
AQ-SOP-3 Idle equipment will be shut down when not in active use; visible emissions from stationary generators will be controlled.
AQ-SOP-4 Dust-control measures will be implemented in road construction and maintenance, as needed. Trucks transporting loose material will be covered or maintain at least 2 feet of freeboard and will not create any visible dust emissions.

AQ-SOP-5 There will be no open burning of construction trash.
AQ-SOP-6 Major operations will be avoided on days when the local Air Quality Index is expected to exceed 150.

Land Management and Private Landowner Coordination:

- All applicable U.S. Forest Service authorizations will be secured, and private landowner notifications will be made prior to conducting off-ROW tree-felling activities.
- Crews will adhere to all land manager- and landowner-specific restrictions (e.g., gate closures, debris retention agreements, and designated access routes, etc.).

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

B1.3 Routine maintenance

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:

KRISTEN DALLDORF Digitally signed by KRISTEN DALLDORF
Date: 2026.11.04 09:36:01 -08'00'

Title: Sierra Nevada Region Environmental Manager