

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW for CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION
Rocky Mountain Region, Western Area Power Administration

Western Area Power Administration and Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc.
Fiber Optic Installation Project From Beaver Creek to Big Sandy Substations
Morgan, Washington, and Lincoln Counties, Colorado

- A. Brief Description of Proposal:** Western Area Power Administration (Western) and Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc. (Tri-State), propose to install fiber optic cable on an existing 66 mile 115-kV Transmission Line between Beaver Creek and Big Sandy Substations in Morgan, Washington, and Lincoln Counties, Colorado. This effort is part of Western's ongoing program to update and improve its communication system. The new cable would replace overhead ground wire (OGW) with new fiber optic ground wire from structure 0-5 on the Beaver Creek-Big Sandy line to the Big Sandy take-off structure. Splice boxes or "pulling sites" would be located at Gary, Woodrow, South Woodrow, and Last Chance Taps Substations on the existing property easement. Additional "pulling sites" depend on the cable reel or spool length and "pulling sites" would be determined and communicated by the construction contractor, after contract award, and would also be located on the existing right-of-way easement. The new cable would not be visibly different from the existing OGW. The project would not change the size of the right-of-way or the way in which it is maintained. Spool trucks are used to pull, wind, and remove the old cable and then feed, tighten, and secure the new suspended cable. Existing access roads would be used, no grading or construction of new access will occur. Ground disturbance would be limited to that associated with utility trucks operating at the "pull sites." Small underground cable trenches would be installed to connect the cable to the communication system within the substation. Work is scheduled for the 4th quarter 2012.
- 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. **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:

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- (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 reseeded, 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.

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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.

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 for 3 years after the signature date. If construction has not commenced within that time, Western’s Environmental Division must be contacted for an updated environmental review prior to construction.

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If any cultural materials are discovered during construction, work in the area shall halt immediately, Western and the Colorado SHPO staff 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).

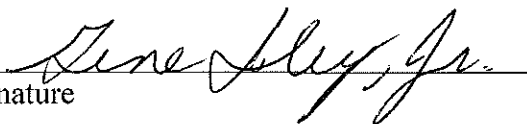
Stringing of the fiber optic line is scheduled to occur outside of the Lesser Prairie Chicken and the Bald Eagle general nesting seasons. Bald Eagle breeding season occurs from February through June and Lesser Prairie Chicken during March and April. If work must occur during the nesting season: (1) the contractor would need to consult with Western's biologist to ensure that any potential nests along the transmission line area are avoided, and (2) a survey would be conducted in advance of the work crews to identify the nests.

All work will be conducted using existing access roads and no wetlands, brooks, rivers, creeks, and/or streams will be disturbed. Contractor will ensure the minimum construction footprint necessary to allow the stringing of the fiber optic line.

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.

Construction activities shall be conducted to minimize scarring, or defacing of the natural surroundings in the vicinity of the work. Except where clearing results from the installation of the pulling station sites, vegetation shall be preserved and shall be protected from damage by the construction operations equipment.

- 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: 5/9/12

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 identified as needing protection through Executive Order, statute, or | X | | |

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| 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: | | | |
| (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; | X | | |
| (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); | X | | |
| (iii) Floodplains and wetlands (as defined in 10 CFR 1022.4, —Compliance with Floodplain and Wetland Environmental Review Requirements: “Definitions,” or its successor); | X | | |
| (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; | X | | |
| (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; | X | | |
| (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 | | |

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| (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 | | |
|---|---|--|--|