

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Western Area Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Tracy Siphon Breaker (SIBT-SIB) Distribution Line Rebuild

Project No.: N/A

Project Manager: Dean Faller

Location: Alameda County, California

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 CFR 1021, Appendix B): B4.3 Upgrading and rebuilding existing powerlines

Description of the Proposed Action:

Western Area Power Administration, Sierra Nevada Region (WAPA) is responsible for the operation and maintenance of several federally owned and operated powerlines throughout California, including the Tracy Siphon Breaker 0.4-kV line (SIBT-SIB), located in Alameda County, California. Part of this responsibility includes ensuring WAPA maintains reliable access to transmission towers and other facilities to comply with the National Electric Safety Code, Western States Coordinating Council, and WAPA directives for protecting human safety and maintaining the reliable operation of the transmission system.

WAPA proposes to replace several poles along the 0.8-mile long SIBT-SIB line and rebuild the line with poles that are more durable. Some existing poles will be kept, and some replaced in their current location, but the new poles will allow for fewer poles to reliably carry this line than the existing design (18 total poles proposed vs. 25 current poles existing). As such, pole spacing will change along the line, though all new pole locations are within the existing right-of-way.

Equipment will include drilling equipment, crane, bucket truck, and backhoe. Diesel fueled equipment will be included.

This powerline is not included in any of WAPA SNR's programmatic environmental assessments, so it is being reviewed in this categorical exclusion determination.

Findings:

In accordance with the requirements and guidance in 10 CFR 1021.102 and Department of Energy's (DOE) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Procedures, WAPA has determined that the proposed action:

- (1) fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021 (see attached Environmental Checklist);
- (2) does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; and
- (3) has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion.

Based on these determinations, WAPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

Signed:

Name: Kristen Dalldorf

Title: Environmental Manager

Attachment: Environmental Checklist

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Checklist

This checklist documents environmental considerations for the proposed project and explains why the project would not have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources and would meet other integral elements of the applied categorical exclusion.

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Project Site Description

The proposed project area is in Alameda County, California.

The dominant habitat at this site consists agricultural land, with the right-of-way following an access road for canals. Two canals cross the project area; they are not wetted at all times.

Equipment staging areas would be within the ROW whenever possible.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

**Environmental Resource
Impacts**

**No Potential for
Significance**

**No Potential for Significance,
with Conditions**

1. Historic and Cultural Resources

Explanation:

The ROW has been subject to heavy ground disturbance and surface grading. Past surveys revealed no cultural resources. Installation of poles is accomplished by drilling equipment, crane, bucket truck, and backhoe. This action is covered under 36 CFR Part 800 - Protection of Historic Properties: No potential to cause effects. To ensure no to minimal impacts to unknown resources, a monitor will be present.

2. Geology and Soils

Explanation:

Ground disturbance is limited to small areas around powerline poles and would not constitute a major impact to surrounding geology or soils.

3. Plants

(including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Explanation:

The project will occur in a disturbed agricultural area. No special-status plants are known or expected in the project area. Construction vehicles and equipment would be required to be clean before entering the project location to prevent spread of invasive weeds.

4. Wildlife

(including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Explanation:

The project will occur in a disturbed agricultural area which has limited habitat value for special status species. The canals when wetted could provide aquatic habitat for special status species including California red-legged frog. Crews will avoid the aquatic habitats and not stage materials or equipment adjacent to the canal berms.

For the protection of migratory birds, if planned activities occur between March 1 and August 15, nesting bird surveys will be required prior to project activities. If a nest is detected, an appropriate buffer will be marked in which all O&M activities and herbicide applications will be prohibited from March 1 to August 15 or until nestlings have fledged. A standard nest buffer of 50 feet (250 feet for raptors) will be used, unless otherwise indicated by the surveying biologist. Nesting surveys can be conducted up to 3 weeks prior to project activities.

5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish

(including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)

Explanation:

Canals in the project area may contain fish, but crews will avoid the aquatic habitats and not stage materials or equipment adjacent to the canal berms. No significant changes to floodplains will occur as part of the pole relocation.

6. Wetlands

Explanation:

Wetlands and jurisdictional waters are neither located in the project area nor have potential to be affected by the project.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Explanation:

Spill prevention measures would be utilized during construction activities. The project would not provide a pathway for groundwater contamination.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Explanation:

All existing poles and proposed new locations are located within an existing right-of-way adjacent to an access road. The land use would not change within the right-of-way. The site is not within, or near, any specially designated areas, such as National Scenic Rivers.

9. Visual Quality

Explanation:

The visual quality would be consistent with the existing use of the right-of-way corridor. There would be no significant change to the visual quality.

10. Air Quality

Explanation:

A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions would occur during construction; however, there would be no significant changes to air quality during or after construction. Contra Costa is out of attainment with Federal NAAQS standards for 8-hour Ozone (2008, Marginal), 8-hour Ozone (2015, Marginal), and PM 2.5 (24 hour, Moderate). Project construction emissions in lb/day were below the Bay Area Air Quality Management District thresholds of significance at 47.11 O3(NOx), 2.4 O3 (ROG), 8.96 PM2.5, and 79.37 PM10, compared to 54 NOx, 54 ROG, 54 PM2.5, and 82 PM10. Estimated project emissions are well below the de minimus thresholds, and therefore General Conformity is determined not to apply to this project. Estimated project emissions are 3.24 tons per year (tpy) Ozone and 0.81 tpy PM2.5, below 100 tpy de minimis thresholds. Construction crews will implement the standard operating procedures agreed to in the San Joaquin Valley ROW Maintenance EA, which are as follows:

AQ-SOP-1: WAPA will adhere to all applicable requirements of those agencies having jurisdiction over air quality matters, and any necessary permits for O&M 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 applicable emission standards; appropriate emissions-control equipment will be maintained for vehicles and equipment, per EPA and/or WAPA 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-5: There will be no open burning of construction trash.

AQ-SOP-7: Major operations will be avoided on days when the local Air Quality Index is expected to exceed 150.

11. Noise

Explanation:

One residence is located approximately 250' from the northern end of the project site. Construction noise for installing new powerline poles would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise would not change.

12. Human Health and Safety

Explanation:

During project activities, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Project activities would not impact human health or safety. All materials generated from the project that can be recycled, will be recycled. Disposed or recycled waste material will be in accordance with applicable Federal, State, and local regulations and ordinances. In the event of a Hazardous Material/Waste spill, Environmental Department will be contacted, dispatch notified, and the appropriate Federal, State, and local regulating authority notified depending on the type and size of the spill. In the right of way, spill drip pans (or similar) will be placed below fueling areas, and spill kit and tools will be available nearby to stop the flow of fuel spills. Employees are trained in spill response.

Evaluation of Other Integral Elements

The proposed project would also meet conditions that are integral elements of the categorical exclusion. The project would not:

Threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders.

Explanation, if necessary:

Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:

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.

Explanation, if necessary:

Have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources, including, but not limited to, those listed in paragraph B(4) of 10 CFR 1021, Appendix B

Explanation, if necessary:

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.

Explanation, if necessary:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description:

WAPA would work closely with the landowners to provide adequate notification of construction timing.

Based on the foregoing, this proposed project does not have the potential to cause significant impacts to any environmentally sensitive resource.

Signed:

Name: Kristen Dalldorf

Title: Environmental Manager