



U.S. Department of Energy

Categorical Exclusion Determination Form

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Proposed Action Title: Mead-Liberty 345-kV Transmission Line Access Road Maintenance and Localized Vegetation Management Project

Program or Field Office: Western Area Power Administration, Desert Southwest Region

Location(s) (City/County/State): West of Wickenburg, Maricopa County, Arizona

Proposed Action Description:

Western Area Power Administration (Western) proposes to conduct access road maintenance and localized vegetation management along approximately 31 miles of the existing Mead-Liberty 345-kV transmission line right-of-way. The project is located on public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management, Arizona State Land Department, Bureau of Reclamation, Arizona Army National Guard (Buckeye Military Reservation) and private land, generally from just north of US Highway 60 west of Wickenburg southward to Interstate 10 near Buckeye, Maricopa County, Arizona (Figure 1).

Access roads along the transmission line have become degraded and impassable in many areas mainly due to erosion. Access road maintenance will include activities to ensure that the roads are in appropriate condition for safe and reliable access to transmission lines by maintenance and inspection crews. These activities may include grading, installing erosion-control measures, repairing low water crossings, and constructing water diversions such as water bars (ridges that direct water off the road). A grader and bulldozer would be the primary equipment types used to conduct this work.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

Categorical Exclusion(s) Applied:

B1.3 - Routine maintenance

For the complete DOE National Environmental Policy Act regulations regarding categorical exclusions, including the full text of each categorical exclusion, see Subpart D of [10 CFR Part 1021](#).

Regulatory Requirements in 10 CFR 1021.410(b): (See full text in regulation)

☒ The proposal fits within a class of actions that is listed in Appendix A or B to 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D.

To fit within the classes of actions listed in 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B, a proposal must be one that would not: (1) threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders; (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; (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; (4) 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 Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B; (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 listed in paragraph B(5) of 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B.

☒ There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposal that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal.

☒ The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion. This 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 10 CFR 1021.211 concerning limitations on actions during preparation of an environmental impact statement.

Based on my review of the proposed action, as NEPA Compliance Officer (as authorized under DOE Order 451.1B), I have determined that the proposed action fits within the specified class(es) of action, the other regulatory requirements set forth above are met, and the proposed action is hereby categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

NEPA Compliance Officer:

Jonel Marcant

Date Determined:

8-27-14

**Mead-Liberty 345-kV Transmission Line
Access Road Maintenance and Localized Vegetation Management
Maricopa County, Arizona
Categorical Exclusion Continuation Sheet**

Project Description (Continued)

Vegetation management work would ensure that vegetation does not interfere with human safety, transmission line conductors, towers, other hardware, or impede access to the transmission line for maintenance crews. Vegetation management would be performed in localized areas along the ROW, primarily using manual methods (hand-controlled, powered, or non-powered tools such as chainsaws and clippers). Mechanical methods (cut-shredders, bulldozers, and track loaders) may also be used.

Special Conditions

- 1) Western will comply with all terms and conditions of Section 404 Nationwide Permit No. #3 as established by the US Army Corps of Engineers, and conditions of the Section 401 Conditional Water Quality Certification, certified by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality.
- 2) Saguaros and agaves will be left in place and undisturbed wherever possible. Saguaros will be topped as opposed to removing the entire plant wherever possible. Small saguaros (less than 10 feet tall) and agave which cannot be avoided will be replanted outside of the impact area.
- 3) Project activities will be scheduled when tortoises are inactive (November 1 to March 1), as feasible. Prior to any surface- or vegetation-disturbing activities in suitable habitat, a qualified biologist shall conduct a survey for desert tortoises. During the desert tortoise season (March 1 through November 1), these surveys shall be conducted within 24 hours of initiation of surface- or vegetation-disturbing activities.
- 4) A qualified Biological Monitor shall be present for all project activities conducted during in suitable habitat during the normal tortoise activity period (March 1 to November 1). The Biological Monitor's responsibilities will include, but will not be limited to (1) inspection of locations of any tortoise burrows or sign, or active bird nests that were located during the pre-construction survey (see below); (2) monitoring potential activity of these species in the project area; (3) regular inspection of the work areas, and other areas related to project activities, for desert tortoise; and (4) regular inspection beneath vehicles and equipment to ensure that they do not present potential hazards to wildlife, including desert tortoises. The Biological Monitor will be authorized by Western to temporarily halt project activity if needed to prevent potential harm to desert tortoise, native nesting birds, or other sensitive species. The work supervisor will coordinate with the Biological Monitor on planned or ongoing maintenance activities and any specific monitoring requirements for each activity in those areas.
- 5) No project activities will take place in the vicinity of a desert tortoise. If a desert tortoise is observed, it will be left to move away from the work site on its own, and activities shall be modified to avoid injuring or harming it. If activities cannot be modified, tortoises shall be moved from harm's way. Upon discovery of a desert tortoise in harm's way, the biologist shall translocate the animal the minimum distance possible (but not more than 2 miles) within appropriate habitat to ensure its safety from death, injury, or collection associated with the project or other activities. Only a qualified biologist may handle a desert tortoise and Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) guidelines will be used to reduce impacts to tortoises (AGFD 2007).
- 6) Project activities which may disturb soils or vegetation will be conducted between August 1 and

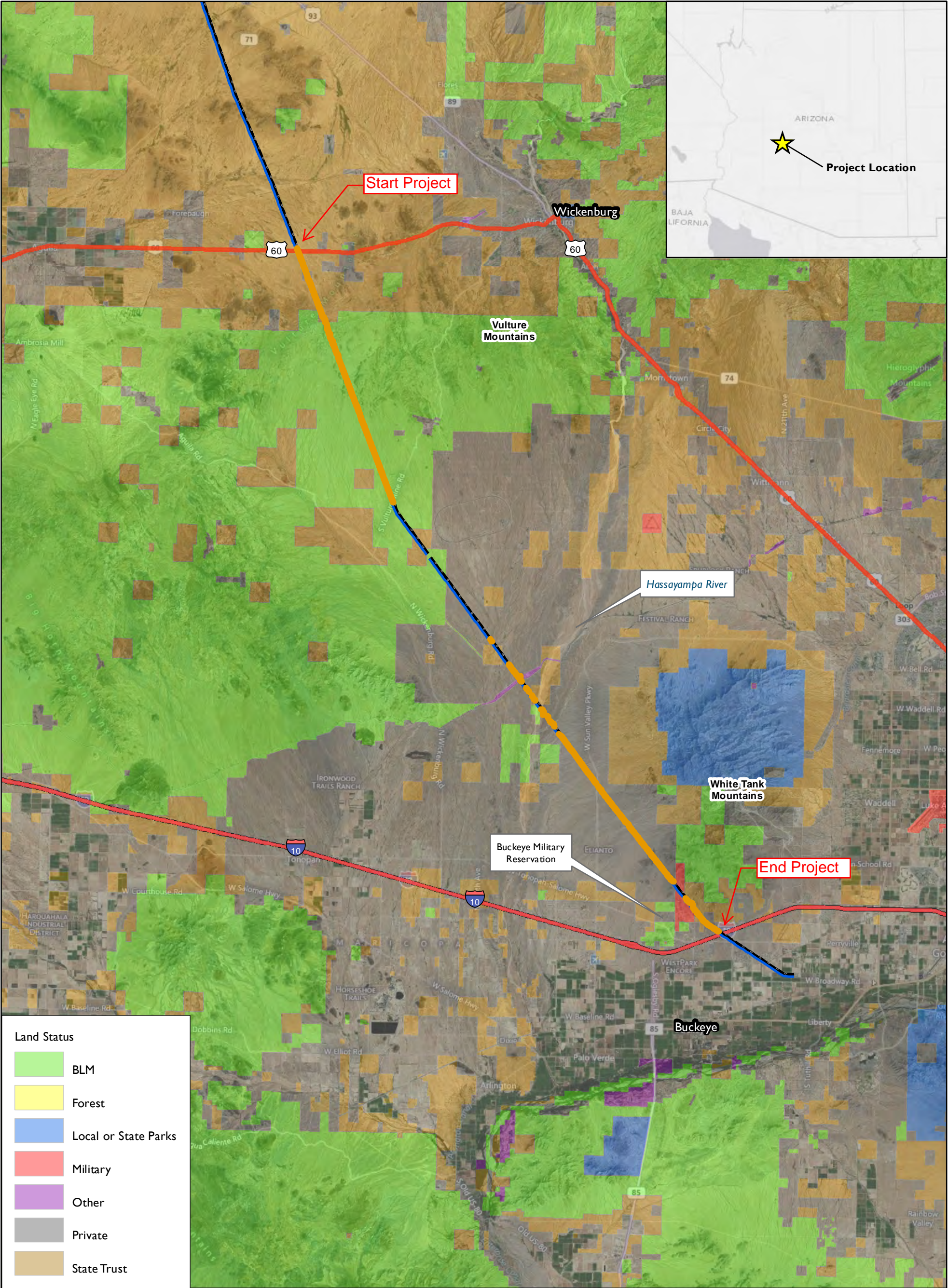
February 14, generally outside the breeding bird season, as feasible. If this is not possible, a qualified biologist shall conduct pre-construction surveys for nesting birds no more than 2 to 3 days ahead of surface- or vegetation-disturbing activities in any location. Project activities may not disturb an active bird nest. If an active bird nest is located on or adjacent to the site, the biologist will designate and flag an appropriate buffer area around the nest where activities will not be permitted. The buffer area will be based on the bird species and nature of project activity.

- 7) No work will occur in the following segments until Western's Regional Preservation Officer (RPO; 602-605-2842) has determined that section 106 requirements have been met :
 - a) 213/1 to 214/1
 - b) 223/5 to 224/3
 - c) 230/5 to 232/3
- 8) In the event of archaeological discoveries or discoveries of human remains during ground-disturbing activities, project activities must cease in the immediate vicinity of the discovery and Western's RPO must be notified immediately. Western's RPO will coordinate with the appropriate agencies and tribes to determine the appropriate course of action.

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 A or 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 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:	X		

(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		
(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		



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May be exempt from public release under the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C.552) Exemption 2 - Circumvention of statute.

Western review required before public release.

Name/Org: DSW Date: 11/13/2012

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Access Road Maintenance Area
Transmission Line

Figure I.
Mead-Liberty 345 kV Transmission Line
Access Road Maintenance Project

Overview

1 in = 25,000 feet

0 4 8 12 Miles

