



U.S. Department of Energy

Categorical Exclusion Determination Form

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Proposed Action Title: Oracle-Saguaro 115-kV Transmission Line Routine Maintenance Project

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

Location(s) (City/County/State): Pinal County, Arizona

Proposed Action Description:

Western Area Power Administration (Western) proposes to conduct routine maintenance along the existing Oracle-Saguaro 115-kV transmission line in Pinal County, Arizona. The transmission line was built in the 1950s, and components of the existing infrastructure are in need of repair or replacement. The transmission line comprises wood H-frame and 3-pole turning structures. Western proposes to conduct routine maintenance between the existing Oracle Substation and structure 6-5 (about 12.5 miles, refer to attached figure). The scope of the proposed work includes the following:

- Replacing worn or damaged wood cross arms and cross braces. Structures currently identified for these repairs include, but are not limited to, 6-5, 8-2, 9-2, 9-5, 11-8, 11-9, 12-7, 12-9, 13-2, 14-1, 14-3, and 15-8;
- Tightening or replacing minor hardware (bolts, guy wires, etc.);
- Replacing insulator bells;
- Maintaining existing culverts;
- Repairing and grading roads and equipment pads at the bases of structures where needed to access structures;
- Trimming or removing vegetation which has encroached on structures, conductors, or access routes.

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: *John Maurer*

Date Determined: 5.4.15

Oracle-Saguaro 115-kV Transmission Line
Routine Maintenance Project, Mile 6 to Oracle Substation
Categorical Exclusion Continuation Sheet

Project Description

Maintenance work at wood pole structures will be conducted by staging equipment within about 75 on either side of the structure, limited to the 100-foot-wide easement. Western may conduct additional minor maintenance within the project segment, as on-site assessment warrants. Equipment used to conduct the work may include bucket trucks, line trucks, crew trucks (F-550s or similar), pole trailers, backhoes, skid-steer loaders (e.g., Bobcats), graders, chainsaws, and manual pruning equipment.

The maintenance work will start no sooner than May 11, 2015. The work will be completed in stages, and will take about 4 weeks to complete.

Special Conditions

1) BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

- a) Western will schedule maintenance activities outside the nesting season (February 15 to August 31) as feasible. Alternatively, if work will occur during this avoidance period, a qualified biologist will conduct nesting-bird surveys prior to project activities. Should an active nest be discovered, the on-site 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.
- b) Due to the possibility that desert tortoise, nesting birds, and other special status species may be found within the project area, a qualified biologist will conduct pre-activity surveys prior to any ground- or vegetation-disturbing work. Based on the results of the pre-activity survey, a biological monitor may be required depending on the nature and location of maintenance activities. The biological monitor will be authorized by Western to temporarily halt project activity if needed to prevent potential harm to special status species. The work supervisor will coordinate with the biological monitor on planned or ongoing activities in desertscrub habitat and any specific monitoring requirements for each activity in those areas.
- c) If at any time tortoise are seen within or near any work area, the on-site biological monitor and project foreman will be immediately notified; project activities will stop and the tortoise will be allowed to move away on its own. Tortoises shall only be moved (to adjacent habitat) if they are in imminent harm's way. Anyone moving a tortoise shall strictly adhere to the Arizona Game and Fish Department's *Guidelines for Handling Sonoran Desert Tortoises*.

2) CULTURAL RESOURCES

- a) Western will not conduct any earthwork within the following spans: 9-3 to 9-4, 13-2 to 13-3, 13-4 to 13-5, 14-1 to 14-2, or at structure 15-1. Western's Environmental Group shall provide maps documenting avoidance areas to project maintenance crews. Crews may trim or cut vegetation by hand in these locations.
- b) In the event of archaeological discoveries or discoveries of human remains during ground-disturbing activities, maintenance activities must cease in the immediate vicinity of the discovery and Western's Environmental Manager (602-605-2524) and Archaeologist (303-328-1779) must be notified immediately. Western's archaeologist will consult with the Arizona SHPO 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		

Figure 1. Project Location

