

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW for CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION

Rocky Mountain Region, Western Area Power Administration

**Waterflow Substation Phase Shifter Transformer Replacement
San Juan County, Colorado**

- A. **Brief Description of Proposal:** Western Area Power Administration (Western) proposes to replace transformers KU1A and KU1B and the three 345-kV circuit breakers at its Waterflow Substation. The project is needed because Waterflow's phase shifting transformers KU1A and KU1B have reached the end of their service life and need to be replaced. Additionally, KU1B failed catastrophically in September 2012, and KU1A was taken out of service due to extensive internal damage. Western has determined that KU1A would not be put back into service. Estimates obtained from the manufacturer indicate that rebuilding the current units would cost more than purchasing new.

The activities associated with the Waterflow phase shifter transformer replacement include:

- Work on the rights-of-way necessary for access to the substation and transformer installation;
- Replacing and protecting existing gravel surfacing within the substation;
- Removing the existing transformer concrete foundations;
- Installation of concrete foundations for electrical equipment;
- Earthwork, excavation, and compaction for installation of oil containment;
- Removal of existing circuit breaker foundations and installation of new foundations;
- Installation of equipment cabinets;
- Providing a soil-applied herbicide where gravel surfacing is placed.

No new roads are authorized under this project and all work will remain with Western's fee title lands and existing rights-of-way.

- B. **Number and Title of the Categorical Exclusion Being Applied:** (See text in 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D.)

B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities.

Additions or modifications to electric power transmission facilities within a previously disturbed or developed facility area. Covered activities include, but are not limited to, switchyard rock grounding upgrades, secondary containment projects, paving projects, seismic upgrading, tower modifications, load-shaping projects (such as installation and use of flywheels and battery arrays), changing insulators, and replacement of poles, circuit breakers, conductors, transformers, and crossarms.

- 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;

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- 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:

This Categorical Exclusion (CX) is valid for one year after the signature date. If construction activities have not commenced within that time or the scope of the work changes, Western’s Environmental Division must be contacted for an updated environmental review.

If any cultural materials are discovered during construction activities, work in the area shall halt immediately and Western’s Regional Preservation Officer shall be contacted, and the material evaluated by an archaeologist or historian meeting the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualification Standards (48 FR 22716, Sept. 1983).

To avoid disturbance to federally threatened and endangered species, all road repair and maintenance activities must occur within the existing road prism with no overland travel.

A preconstruction survey for Burrowing Owls is required by Bureau of Land Management, Farmington Field Office, for proposed projects scheduled to be constructed within designated potential habitat during the nesting season of April 1 to July 31. Occupied Burrowing Owl nests will not be disturbed within a 165-foot (50-meters) radius from April 1 to August 15. After August 15, any project that will cause destruction of the nest burrow can only begin after confirmation that the nest burrow is no longer occupied.

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Potential jurisdictional wetlands, as defined by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE 1987), occur at the Shumway Arroyo crossing of the southernmost wetland area, and at an unnamed ephemeral wash at the northernmost wetland area. If the proposed construction activities occur in these areas, formal wetland delineation must be conducted. If any dredge and fill occurs in Shumway Arroyo, then Clean Water Act 404 and 401 permits must be obtained.

Western has a clean vehicle policy and all equipment used must be cleaned prior to use in order to prevent transporting of invasive plant or noxious weed seeds. Operators will be required to wash all machinery (trailers, trucks, UTVs, etc.) before entering the action area and working on the project to prevent transport of non-native invasive species.

Western shall exercise care to preserve the natural landscape and shall conduct this operation to prevent any unnecessary destruction, scarring, or defacing of the natural surroundings in the project vicinity. Except where clearing is required for permanent works, approved construction roads, or excavation operations, vegetation shall be preserved and shall be protected from damage by Western's construction operations and equipment.

To comply with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, work authorized under this CX should be scheduled outside the March 1 through July 31 general nesting periods. If construction activities are to be done during this period, contact Western's Environmental Division so that they may arrange for a pedestrian survey to be conducted in advance of the maintenance crews to identify active nests that are to be avoided.

Determination: Based on my review of information provided to me and in my possession concerning the proposed action, I have 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: 5/1/15

Gene Iley, Jr.
NEPA Compliance Officer
Rocky Mountain Customer Service Region
Western Area Power Administration

Prepared by: Brian Little

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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. Extraordinary circumstances are unique situations presented by specific proposals, 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	X		

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<p>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:</p>			
<p>(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;</p>	X		
<p>(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);</p>	X		
<p>(iii) Floodplains and wetlands (as defined in 10 CFR 1022.4, —Compliance with Floodplain and Wetland Environmental Review Requirements: “Definitions,” or its successor);</p>	X		
<p>(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;</p>	X		
<p>(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;</p>	X		
<p>(vi) Special sources of water (such as sole-source aquifers, wellhead protection areas, and other water sources that are vital in a region); and</p>	X		
<p>(vii) Tundra, coral reefs, or rain forests; or</p>	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		
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