



U.S. Department of Energy Categorical Exclusion Determination Form

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Proposed Action Title: Mead-Liberty and Mead-Perkins Vegetation Management, Route 66 to Interstate 40

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

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

Proposed Action Description:

Western Area Power Administration (Western) proposes to conduct integrated vegetation management (IVM) activities along the existing Mead-Liberty 345-kV and Mead-Perkins 500-kV rights-of-way (ROWs) corridors in Mohave County, Arizona. The target transmission lines are part of Western's Intertie power system. The project area includes the two parallel ROWs for about 14 linear miles, from State Route 66 to Interstate 40 (approximately structures 77/1 and 93/4 as measured on the Mead-Liberty transmission line). The project is located on Arizona State Trust, Bureau of Land Management, and private lands (refer to attached figure).

The scope of work for the proposed action includes conducting a single pass within the two transmission line ROWs. Vegetation which presents a threat to the transmission line or structures would be removed. In addition, trees, taller shrubs, and cacti which are not compatible with Western's desired condition per WAPA Order 450.3A and Western's IVM Guidance Manual (2011) would also be removed, trimmed, or relocated. IVM activities will be conducted using physical or mechanical methods (e.g., hand saws, chain saws, mowers). No herbicides will be applied as part of the current proposed action. No access road repairs or blading are included in the current scope of the IVM activities.

Project activities are expected to start in March 2016 and will take one to two months to complete.

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: *Anna Marantz*

Date Determined: 2-25-16

Mead-Liberty and Mead-Perkins Transmission Lines, Vegetation Management, State Route 66 to Interstate 40 - Continuation Sheet

Special Conditions

1. Western and its contractors shall attend a Worker Environmental Awareness Program prior the start of on-site activities to ensure that workers are familiar with the sensitive environmental resources and associated protocols within the project area.
2. Project activities shall be scheduled between September 1 and April 14, to avoid impacts to protected nesting birds. Project activities shall not harm birds, eggs, nestlings, or active nests. If project activities will occur during the nesting bird season (April 15-August 31), a qualified biologist shall conduct pre-activity surveys for nesting birds ahead of vegetation management crews. Active nests shall be flagged and an avoidance buffer established based on the nesting species and activity.
3. This project occurs within the reintroduction (non-essential, experimental) area for California Condors.
 - a. If condor(s) occur at project site, Western or its contractor will cease all activity until condor(s) leave on their own. The onsite supervisor shall immediately contact Western Environmental Affairs. Environmental Affairs will then contact the USFWS and Peregrine Fund to report the sighting.
 - b. No human interaction is allowed with the bird(s), especially non-permitted hazing (e.g., "shooing" birds).
 - c. Western and its contractor will clean project sites (e.g., personal and construction trash) at the end of each day to minimize attracting condors.
4. Tortoises discovered to be in imminent danger during project activities may be moved out of harm's way following the Arizona Game and Fish Department's Guidelines for Handling Sonoran Desert Tortoises Encountered on Development Projects (2007, attached).
5. A cultural monitor shall flag historic properties within the ROW for monitoring and avoidance.



Desert Southwest Region
Western Area Power Administration
An agency of the U.S. Department of Energy

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Scale 1:196,900
2/25/2016 2:48 P.M.

- Proposed or Re-route T-Line
- Complete T-Line
- Incomplete T-Line
- Distribution Line
- Underground T-Line
- INTERSTATE HIGHWAY
- MAJOR HIGHWAY (US/STATE)
- ▲ Proposed Facilities
- ▲ Facility / Substation / Switchyard
- ▲ States
- ▲ Counties
- ▲ USGS 250K Topo-Quads

Project Location

GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING SONORAN DESERT TORTOISES
ENCOUNTERED ON DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS
Arizona Game and Fish Department
Revised October 23, 2007

The Arizona Game and Fish Department (Department) has developed the following guidelines to reduce potential impacts to desert tortoises, and to promote the continued existence of tortoises throughout the state. These guidelines apply to short-term and/or small-scale projects, depending on the number of affected tortoises and specific type of project.

The Sonoran population of desert tortoises occurs south and east of the Colorado River. Tortoises encountered in the open should be moved out of harm's way to adjacent appropriate habitat. If an occupied burrow is determined to be in jeopardy of destruction, the tortoise should be relocated to the nearest appropriate alternate burrow or other appropriate shelter, as determined by a qualified biologist. Tortoises should be moved less than 48 hours in advance of the habitat disturbance so they do not return to the area in the interim. Tortoises should be moved quickly, kept in an upright position parallel to the ground at all times, and placed in the shade. Separate disposable gloves should be worn for each tortoise handled to avoid potential transfer of disease between tortoises. Tortoises must not be moved if the ambient air temperature exceeds 40° Celsius (105° Fahrenheit) unless an alternate burrow is available or the tortoise is in imminent danger.

A tortoise may be moved up to one-half mile, but no further than necessary from its original location. If a release site, or alternate burrow, is unavailable within this distance, and ambient air temperature exceeds 40° Celsius (105° Fahrenheit), the Department should be contacted to place the tortoise into a Department-regulated desert tortoise adoption program. Tortoises salvaged from projects which result in substantial permanent habitat loss (e.g. housing and highway projects), or those requiring removal during long-term (longer than one week) construction projects, will also be placed in desert tortoise adoption programs. *Managers of projects likely to affect desert tortoises should obtain a scientific collecting permit from the Department to facilitate temporary possession of tortoises.* Likewise, if large numbers of tortoises (>5) are expected to be displaced by a project, the project manager should contact the Department for guidance and/or assistance.

Please keep in mind the following points:

- . These guidelines do not apply to the Mojave population of desert tortoises (north and west of the Colorado River). Mojave desert tortoises are specifically protected under the Endangered Species Act, as administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- . These guidelines are subject to revision at the discretion of the Department. We recommend that the Department be contacted during the planning stages of any project that may affect desert tortoises.
- . Take, possession, or harassment of wild desert tortoises is prohibited by state law. Unless specifically authorized by the Department, or as noted above, project personnel should avoid disturbing any tortoise.