

# CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION



Western Area  
Power Administration  
Rocky Mountain Region

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**Proposed Action Title: Seminoe Area Distribution Line Rebuild, Distribution Line Removal, and Fiber Optic Installation**

**Location: Carbon County, Wyoming**

**Project Number: 2020-041**

**Expiration Date: December 31, 2026**

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## **A. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION:**

Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), Rocky Mountain Region (RMR), proposes to complete a number of maintenance activities in the Seminoe area in Carbon County, Wyoming. These activities include:

- Installation of WAPA's Seminoe-Seminoe Mountain (S-SEM) and Seminoe Mountain Microwave (SMM) 2.4-kV Distribution Lines;
- Removal of a portion of WAPA's Seminoe-Seminoe Camp (S-SEM) 4.16-kV Distribution Line and High Plains Power's Seminoe-Bairoil 34.5kV Distribution Line and WAPA's entire Seminoe Tap-Seminoe Mountain MW (SMMT-SMM) 4.16-kv Distribution Line;
- Installation of optical ground wire (OPGW) on the SMM 2.4-kV Distribution Line and portions of the S-SEM 2.4-kV Distribution Line and the Miracle Mile-Platte (MM-PLAP) and Miracle Mile-Seminoe (MM-S) 115-kV Transmission Lines; and

The purpose of this project is to update aging equipment, remove unused portions of facilities, consolidate facilities for a smaller footprint and more efficient maintenance, and update and improve WAPA's communication system. The distribution line rebuild will consist of replacing the existing structures with similar structures that meet current WAPA design standards. The rebuild and installation of distribution lines will involve augering new structure holes, installing the new wood structures, backfilling the structure holes, and installing new hardware and conductor. The distribution line removal will include removing the conductor by cutting it at intervals and detaching it from the structures. The detached conductor will be pulled onto spools for transportation and disposal. The structures will then be removed either by cutting the structures off at ground level or by completely winching the structures out of the ground, depending on the surrounding topography. Removed structures will be loaded onto trailers and hauled out of the area. Five S-SEM structures located west of the Seminoe Switchyard will be left in place, with the top of the structure and conductor removed, to preserve communication paths for the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). The OPGW will be installed by positioning pulling sites at regular intervals to feed, tighten, and secure the OPGW to the distribution and transmission structures. Splice enclosures or coil brackets will be installed to terminate the OPGW. Equipment used for the line work and OPGW installation includes bucket trucks, truck-mounted augers and cranes, skid-steer loaders, utility trucks, pole trailers, equipment trailers, wire pullers and tensioners, and cable reel trailers. Work will occur on project and public lands managed by the BOR and the Bureau of Land Management. The majority of work will occur

within WAPA's existing rights of way (ROWs). The work areas will be accessed by existing access routes and overland travel; some access road maintenance may be required.

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## **B. STIPULATIONS PERTAINING TO PROPOSAL:**

- 1) If the scope of work of this project changes, RMR's Environment Department must be contacted to determine whether additional environmental review is required.
- 2) **This Categorical Exclusion expires on December 31, 2026.** If all project work has not been completed by the expiration date, or if the need for an environmental compliance extension is anticipated, RMR's Environment Department must be contacted for an updated environmental review.
- 3) Any injured or orphaned birds and all observed active nests must be immediately reported to the RMR Avian Protection Lead at (970) 593-8803. Any dead birds must be reported to the RMR Avian Protection Lead within twenty-four (24) hours of discovery. Additional documentation, such as photographs and GPS coordinates, may be requested to support RMR's reporting requirements to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- 4) If any cultural resources are inadvertently discovered during implementation of the proposed action, work within 100 feet of the discovery area must halt immediately and an RMR Archaeologist must be contacted immediately at (970) 302-4753 or (970) 286-3523. Work in the area of discovery must not resume until written notification to proceed is provided by an RMR Archaeologist.
- 5) If any possible human remains are inadvertently discovered during implementation of the proposed action, work within 100 feet of the discovery area must halt immediately and an RMR Archaeologist must be notified immediately at (970) 302-4753 or (970) 286-3523 (no later than 24 hours from the time of discovery). A reasonable effort must be made to protect the remains from looting and/or further damage. Work in the area of discovery must not resume until written notification to proceed is provided by an RMR Archaeologist.
- 6) To prevent the transport of non-native and invasive plants and animals, including noxious weeds and aquatic nuisance species, work crews must thoroughly wash all vehicles and equipment (trailers, trucks, UTVs, etc.) before entering the action area and working on the project.
- 7) Activities involving the use of fuel, oil, hydraulic fluid, or other petroleum products must comply with RMR's Spill Response Plan (SRP).



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**C. NUMBER AND TITLE OF THE CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION BEING APPLIED:**

(See text in 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D.)

B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities

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**D. REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS 10 CFR 1021.410 (b):** (See full text in regulation)

The proposed action fits within a class of actions that is listed in Appendix A or B of 10 CFR 1021.

To fit within the classes of actions listed in 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 the Department of Energy (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 Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (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 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 of the Department of Agriculture, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Institutes of Health.

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 improperly segmented, and 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.

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**E. DETERMINATION:**

Based on my review of information conveyed to me and in my possession (or attached) concerning 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.

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Signature and Date

James Wood  
NEPA Compliance Officer  
Rocky Mountain Region  
Western Area Power Administration

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