

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION



Proposed Action Title: Curecanti-Morrow Point No. 1 230-kV Transmission Line and Curecanti-Morrow Point No. 2 13.8-kV Distribution Line Access Road and Right-of-Way Maintenance and Structure Replacements

Location: Montrose County, Colorado

Project Numbers: 2021-021 and 2021-022

Expiration Date: December 31, 2026

A. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION:

Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), Rocky Mountain Region (RMR), proposes to conduct routine access road and right-of-way (ROW) maintenance and structure replacements on portions of the Curecanti-Morrow Point No. 1 (CCI-MP-1) 230-kV Transmission Line and the Curecanti-Morrow Point No. 2 (CCI-MP-2) 13.8-kV Distribution Line in Montrose County, Colorado. The purpose of this project is to replace existing CCI-MP-1 Structures 0/4, 1/4, and 1/5, and CCI-MP-2 Structure 1/2. These structures have been identified as structurally deficient. The structure replacements will be 5 to 10 feet taller than the existing structures and have minor structural updates to meet current WAPA design standards, but they will be visually similar to the existing structures. The replacement structures will be placed in the existing structure holes whenever possible. The full scope of the structure replacements will include removing the existing structures, re-auguring the existing structure holes or auguring new structure holes, installing the new wood replacement structures, backfilling the structure holes, and installing new hardware. Routine access road and ROW maintenance is required to facilitate safe access for these structure replacements and to ensure safe access for future inspection and maintenance activities. Access road and ROW maintenance may include: blading; grading; removal of rocks, vegetation, and other obstacles impeding safe travel; installation, repair, and replacement of water bars, rip-rap, and other erosion control measures; cleanout, repair, and in-kind replacement of culverts and other drainage features; landing construction; and soil stabilization. In addition, one new spur route will be established within WAPA's existing ROW to access CCI-MP-2 Structure 1/2. Equipment used for this project may include motor graders, bulldozers, excavators, dump trucks, compactors, skid-steers, work trucks, bucket trucks, truck-mounted augers and cranes, pole trailers, and equipment trailers. Work will occur on private lands and public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. This work will be confined to WAPA's existing access routes and ROW.

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) **Detailed maps of the access roads cleared for maintenance have been provided to WAPA's maintenance crews.** If clarification of maps is required, please contact RMR's Archaeologist at (970) 286-3523 or RMR's Environmental Protection Specialist at (970) 593-8803.
- 4) **Gunnison sage-grouse (GUSG) critical habitat exists between CCI-MP-1 Structures 0/1 to 0/5 and CCI-MP-2 Structures 0/1 to 0/6. Within these structure ranges, work crews must adhere to the following restrictions to avoid and minimize disturbance to breeding and nesting GUSG and its critical habitat:**
 - a) Only conduct work outside of the GUSG lekking, nesting, and brood rearing season of March 1 to July 15;
 - b) Use existing access routes and remain on them, except when necessary to conduct the described work activities; and
 - c) Avoid or minimize disturbance to sagebrush and other shrubs outside the 50-foot structure clearing radius.
- 5) Any injured or orphaned birds and all observed active nests must be immediately reported to RMR Environment at (970) 593-8803 or (970) 342-6462. Any dead birds must be reported to RMR Environment 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.
- 6) 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 notification to proceed is provided by an RMR Archaeologist.
- 7) 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 notification to proceed is provided by an RMR Archaeologist.
- 8) 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.
- 9) Activities involving the use of fuel, oil, hydraulic fluid, or other petroleum products must comply with RMR's Spill Response Plan (SRP).



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

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

B1.3 Routine maintenance

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.



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.

Signature and Date

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

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