

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION



Proposed Action Title: Glendo-Whiterock North and Whiterock-Stegall North 115-kV Transmission Lines Optical Ground Wire Installation and Whiterock-Stegall North 115-kV Transmission Line Structure Replacements and Access Road Maintenance

Location: Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska Goshen and Platte Counties, Wyoming

Project Number: 2022-025

Expiration Date: December 31, 2027

A. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION:

Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), Rocky Mountain Region (RMR), proposes to replace existing overhead ground wire (OGW) with new optical ground wire (OPGW) on the full length of the Glendo-Whiterock North (GLD-WRK-N) and Whiterock-Stegall North (WRK-SG-N) 115-kV Transmission Lines. In addition to the OPGW installation, WAPA also proposes to conduct routine access road maintenance on existing roads used to access WRK-SG-N Structures 30/1-31/5, 31/8-34/3, 36/5-36/7, 39/2-Lingle Tap, 57/3-58/6, 64/3-65/2, and 69/2-70/4 and replace existing WRK-SG-N Structures 28/5, 33/4, 38/1, 46/3, 50/8, 54/4, 61/4, 66/1, 69/6, and 74/1. This work will occur in Scotts Bluff County, Nebraska, as well as Goshen and Platte counties, Wyoming.

The purpose of the OPGW installation is to update and improve WAPA's communication system. The OPGW will not be visibly different from the existing OGW. The existing OGW will be used to pull the new OPGW into place, with pulling sites positioned at regular intervals to pull, wind, and remove the OGW, and feed, tighten, and secure the new OPGW. The individual lengths of OPGW will be spliced together at regular intervals along the spans, and permanent splice enclosures will be installed on transmission structures at these locations. Equipment used for this project may include helicopters, bucket trucks, wire pullers and tensioners, cranes, splicing trailers, cable reel trailers, and utility trucks. The helicopter will only use preapproved landing zones (LZs).

Structure replacements will be completed for existing wood structures that have been identified as structurally deficient. The new 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 structures, backfilling the structure holes, and installing new hardware. Equipment used for this project may include bucket trucks, truck-mounted augers and cranes, skid-steer loaders, utility trucks, pole trailers, and equipment trailers.

The access road maintenance will occur on existing roads and may include: blading; grading; removal of rocks and other obstacles impeding safe travel; repair, replacement, and installation of water bars, rip-rap, and other erosion control measures; and cleanout, repair, and replacement of culverts and other drainage features. No new roads will be constructed. Equipment used for this project would include a motor grader, dozer, excavator, skid-steer, and work trucks.

All work will be confined to WAPA's existing rights-of-way (ROWs) on private lands, public lands managed by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the State of Wyoming, and lands managed by the Department of Defense (DOD).

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, 2027.** 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) **The Environmental Restrictions Area maps provided to WAPA's maintenance crews include cultural resource boundaries.** No ground disturbance is allowed within these cultural resource boundaries. All access within these cultural resource boundaries must be limited to existing access roads. If ground disturbance within these cultural resource boundaries is necessary, an RMR Archeologist must be contacted at (970) 302-4753 or (970) 286-3523. No ground disturbance within these cultural resource boundaries is authorized until written notification to proceed is provided by an RMR Archeologist.
- 4) 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.
- 5) Only in-kind culvert replacement and crossing maintenance is authorized. If culverts or crossings must be enlarged, expanded, or placed in new locations, RMR's Environment Department must be contacted to determine whether additional environmental review is required.
- 6) If rip-rap or other fill must be placed within waters of the United States (within wetland boundaries or below the ordinary high-water mark of surface waters), RMR's Environment Department must be contacted to determine whether additional environmental review is required.
- 7) 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 Archeologist 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 Archeologist.



- 8) 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.
- 9) Vehicles and equipment (trailers, trucks, UTVs, etc.) will not be moved between work areas without first taking reasonable measures to ensure they are free of soil, seeds, vegetation matter, or other debris that could contain noxious weed seeds.
- 10) 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, Regional Environmental Manager
Rocky Mountain Region
Western Area Power Administration

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