

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Western Area Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: 2025 Helicopter Landing Zone for Keswick Olinda Fiber Replacement Project Phase 1

Project No.: 2025_02

Project Manager: Jeff Miller

Location: Shasta County

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4. 7 Fiber Optic Cable

Description of the Proposed Action:

Western Area Power Administration, Sierra Nevada Region (WAPA) is responsible for the operation and maintenance of several federally owned and operated transmission lines throughout California. Part of this responsibility includes ensuring WAPA maintains reliable access to transmission towers and other facilities to comply with the National Electric Safety Code, Western States Coordinating Council, and WAPA directives for protecting human safety and maintaining the reliable operation of the transmission system.

WAPA proposes to replace 17 miles of existing overhead static line with OPGW (optical ground wire) on three 230 kilovolt transmission lines (Keswick-Olinda, Keswick-O'Banion, and Shasta-Cottonwood) coming from the Keswick substation to Olinda substation. This line transmits power from the Keswick hydropower plant and dam. First phase starts with the Keswick-O'Banion (KE-OBN) line from the Keswick substation to Tower 4-1. No construction activities or ground disturbance is required for this action. A portion of this optical fiber cable replacement occurs over the Sacramento River between WAPA tower structures KE-ODA 1-2 and 1-3 and would be completed in 1 day. A truck and tensioner will be located at opposite ends of the segments being worked on. This equipment will be parked within the right-of-way (ROW) or along the access maintenance roads and outside of sensitive areas. This CX is to cover the helicopter landing zone located on undeveloped private land southwest of Tower 10-2 outside WAPA's ROW. The helicopter will be used to transport materials and line crew to the top of each tower.

Findings:

In accordance with Section 1021.410(b) of the Department of Energy's (DOE) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Regulations (57 FR 15144, Apr. 24, 1992, as amended at 61 FR 36221-36243, Jul. 9, 1996; 61 FR 64608, Dec. 6, 1996, 76 FR 63764, Nov. 14, 2011), WAPA has determined that the proposed action:

- (1) fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D (see attached Environmental Checklist);
- (2) does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; and
- (3) has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion.

Based on these determinations, WAPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

KRISTEN
Signed: **DALLDORF**
Digitally signed by
KRISTEN DALLDORF
Date: 2024.12.11
08:43:57 -08'00' Date: 12/11/24

Attachment: Environmental Checklist

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Checklist

This checklist documents environmental considerations for the proposed project and explains why the project would not have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources and would meet other integral elements of the applied categorical exclusion.

Proposed Action: 2025 Helicopter Landing Zone for Keswick Olinda Fiber Replacement Project Phase 1

Project Site Description

The proposed project area is located in Shasta County, California (Township 32N, Range 5W, Section 4).

The setting along the WAPA transmission system between Keswick substation and DE-ODA Tower 4-1 consists of mixed conifer, secondary-growth, forest and cleared transmission line rights-of-way (ROW). Oak woodlands and chaparral exist in lower elevations, with seasonal wetlands occasionally crossing the right-of-way. Clusters of residential housing developments are located near Towers 0-6, 2-1, 2-5 to 3-3, and larger residential lots near Tower 3-6 to Tower 4-1. The line crosses the Sacramento River between Towers 1-2 and 1-3. The line crosses State Highway 299 at Towers 2-2 and 2-3. The proposed helicopter landing zone is located on undeveloped private land southwest of Tower 10-2 outside of the ROW.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources		
<u>Explanation:</u>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Known cultural resources have been identified within the proposed area of potential effect (APE); however, there are no anticipated activities involving ground disturbance. It is determined this project would have no adverse effect to cultural/historic properties. If cultural or paleontological resources are identified during implementation, halt work within a 50-foot buffer of the discovery and contact Environmental Resources immediately.

2. Geology and Soils

Explanation:



No ground disturbance will take place along the transmission lines.

3. Plants

(including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Explanation:



The project does not include ground disturbance; therefore, no special-status plants would be impacted.

4. Wildlife

(including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)

Explanation:



No construction activities or ground disturbance would occur; therefore, no impacts to wildlife or special status wildlife would occur. The project activities will be outside of the nesting season for this area.

5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish

(including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)

Explanation:



The project does not include ground disturbance; therefore, no impacts to water bodies, floodplains, or fish would occur. The line crosses the Sacramento River and a Section 10 Rivers and Harbors Act permission was received from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

6. Wetlands

Explanation:



Seasonal wetlands, springs, and seeps are present within the ROW. The project does not include ground disturbance; therefore, no impacts to wetlands would occur. All trucks and equipment would be parked outside of sensitive habitat and within the ROW or on the maintenance road.

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Explanation:



The project does not include ground disturbance; therefore, no impacts to groundwater or pathways to groundwater would occur.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Explanation:



The land use would not change along the project corridor.

9. Visual Quality

Explanation:



There is no change to the visual quality along the project corridor.

10. Air Quality

Explanation:



Air Quality emissions would be from short-term helicopter use with only a few hours at each location and exhaust from worker's vehicles. The Project would be exempt from federal General Conformity Analysis and Determination because project emissions do not exceed de minimis levels for O&M activities, including helicopter emissions.

Project emissions would not exceed local air quality district standards. The crew would follow WAPA's procedures during the project:

AQ-SOP-1: Adhere to all applicable requirements of those agencies having jurisdiction over air quality matters, and any necessary permits for O&M will be obtained.

AQ-SOP-2: Machinery and vehicles will be kept in good operating condition and older equipment will be replaced with equipment meeting applicable emission standards; appropriate emissions-control equipment will be maintained for vehicles and equipment, per EPA and/or WAPA air-emission requirements.

AQ-SOP-3: Idle equipment will be shut down when not in active use; visible emissions from stationary generators will be controlled.

AQ-SOP-4: Dust –control measures will be implemented in road construction and maintenance, as needed. Trucks transporting loose material will be covered or maintain at least two feet of free board and will not create any visible dust emissions.

AQ-SOP-5: There will be no open burning of construction trash.

AQ-SOP-7: Major operations will be avoided on days when the local Air Quality Index is expected to exceed 150.

AQ-SOP-11: Use reasonably practicable methods and devices to control, prevent, and otherwise minimize atmospheric emissions or discharges of air contaminants.

11. Noise

Explanation:



Helicopter noise would be temporary during daylight hours.

12. Human Health and Safety

Explanation:



During project activities, WAPA would follow all WAPA standard safety practices and OSHA standards. A traffic control plan has been prepared and will be used during implementation.

Evaluation of Other Integral Elements

The proposed project would also meet conditions that are integral elements of the categorical exclusion. The project would not:



Threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders.

Explanation, if necessary:



Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:



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.

Explanation, if necessary:



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.

Explanation, if necessary:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description:

WAPA will work closely with the landowners to provide adequate notification of project activities.

Based on the foregoing, this proposed project does not have the potential to cause significant impacts to any environmentally sensitive resource.

Signed:

KRISTEN
DALLDORF

Digitally signed by
KRISTEN DALLDORF
Date: 2024.12.11
08:43:31 -08'00'

Date: 12/11/24