

Record of Categorical Exclusion
for
Georgia Power Company's
Hammond-Weiss Dam Transmission Line Rebuild Project (Phase II)
Loan Application #EIR0045

Description of Categorically Excluded Action

The United States Department of Energy (DOE), Loan Programs Office (LPO), may provide loan guarantees for energy infrastructure projects under Section 1706 of Title XVII of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, as amended by the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (42 U.S.C. 16517) and the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (Pub. L. No. 119-21, 139 Stat. 72 (July 4, 2025)) (the Energy Dominance Financing or EDF Program). The purpose of the EDF Program is to finance projects and facilities in the U.S. that retool, repower, repurpose, or replace energy infrastructure that has ceased operations or enable operating energy infrastructure to increase capacity or output (42 U.S.C. 16517(a)(2) and Pub. L. No. 119-21, 139 Stat. 72 (July 4, 2025)).

LPO is considering whether to issue a loan guarantee of a funding facility to Georgia Power Company (GPC) pursuant to its authority under the EDF Program. In its application, GPC has identified Phase II of the Hammond-Weiss Dam Transmission Line Rebuild Project (Project) for inclusion in the funding facility that is the subject of DOE's loan guarantee. GPC may request inclusion of multiple individual projects with independent utility in the funding facility that is the subject of the DOE loan guarantee; accordingly, DOE will complete an environmental review pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for these projects prior to their inclusion in the funding facility that is the subject of DOE's loan guarantee.

The purpose of the project is to upgrade the existing Hammond-Weiss Dam 115kV transmission power for improved energy efficiency. Accordingly, the Proposed Action considered in this record of categorical exclusion is LPO's issuance of Federal financial support for the Phase II of the Project.

Project Description

The Hammond-Weiss Dam 115kV transmission line is located on existing GPC right-of-way in Floyd County, Georgia. GPC intends to rebuild the line in two phases. Phase I began construction in May 2025 and consists of rebuilding 4.17 miles. Phase I is noted for context only; LPO's Proposed Action does not include Phase I. Phase II is scheduled to begin construction in late July 2025 and will consist of rebuilding 6.9 miles. The new structures (poles) and conductors are anticipated to be in service for at least 40 years.

The rebuild includes replacement of transmission conductors, overhead ground wire and fiber, and replacing all existing structures, a laydown yard, and access road improvements. The existing right-of-way is 100 feet. Since the Project will be conducted in an existing, previously disturbed

and maintained right-of-way, the extent of ground disturbance is expected to be less than half of the actual right-of-way width. Ground disturbing activities will consist of removing and pulling new conductors between structures and staging the conductors. No new ROW clearing or tree cutting is needed for the rebuild.

Secondary roads will be used to transport equipment and materials to the ROW via existing access roads. Existing dirt/gravel access road along the ROW will be used for installing new structures and pulling new conductor; wood mats will be used for traversing wet, low-lying areas. Additional gravel will be placed on the ROW access roads as needed to support construction vehicles and material transportation. Temporary, graveled laydown yards will be kept as close to the ROW as possible.

The Project does not require a water supply connection to any private potable water sources. The Project does not plan on creating point sources of water discharges. Sediment and erosion control measures including silt fencing and other storm water best management practices will be utilized in the construction of the Project. Refueling and staging areas will be located away from identified sensitive resources and best management practices such as secondary containment for tanks will be utilized. Major air emissions from project development or the Project are not anticipated and the only air emissions anticipated would be minimal short-term emissions from construction equipment.

The Project is located within the range of species protected by the Endangered Species Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531, *et seq.*), including: the proposed threatened monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*), endangered gray bat (*Myotis grisescens*), endangered Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*), endangered northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*), proposed endangered tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*), the non-essential experimental population whooping crane (*Grus americana*), endangered southern clubshell (*Pleurobema decisum*), endangered southern pigtoe (*Pleurobema georgianum*), endangered Alabama leatherflower (*Clematis socialis*), threatened Georgia rockcress (*Arabis georgiana*), endangered green pitcher-plant (*Sarracenia oreophila*), threatened large-flowered skullcap (*Scutellaria montana*), threatened Mohr's Barbara's buttons (*Marshallia mohrii*), endangered Tennessee yellow-eyed grass (*Xyris tennesseensis*), and the endangered whorled sunflower (*Helianthus verticillatus*).

DOE determined that the Project *may affect but is not likely to adversely affect* the threatened Mohr's Barbara's buttons based on the applicant's proposed conservation measures. Specifically, GPC will use flagging and fencing to isolate occurrences of the species from direct impact and wood mats will be used to protect suitable habitat. DOE initiated Endangered Species Act, Section 7, consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). On July 16, 2025, the Service concurred with DOE's effect determination for the Mohr's Barbara's buttons. For all other federally protected species, DOE determined that there will be no effect.

In accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, LPO consulted with the Georgia and Alabama State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPO) and thirteen (13) federally recognized Indian Tribes and Tribal Nations (Tribes) that may have an interest in the Project area. The Georgia and Alabama SHPOs concurred with LPO's finding of No Adverse Effect for this Project on July 7 and

8, 2025, respectively. The Muscogee (Creek) Nation was the only tribe to respond. The Muscogee Nation asked several questions about the Project; LPO has addressed the questions.

In the event of a post-review unanticipated discovery of cultural resources and/or human remains during construction, DOE LPO will determine actions to resolve adverse effects and notify the SHPO, any Tribe that might attach religious and cultural significance to the affected property, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) within 48 hours of being notified of the discovery, pursuant to 36 CFR 800.13(b)(3). Additionally, if human remains are encountered during construction, the provisions of the Alabama Burial Act (Code of Alabama 1975 §13A-7-23.1, as amended; Alabama Historical Commission Administrative Code Chapter 460-X-10 Burials) would be followed. This stipulation would be included in construction plans.

The Project scope of work meets the definition of “maintenance activities” as described under Section 404(f) of the Clean Water Act and is therefore exempt from USACE permitting. If any activities are not exempt, GPC will pursue a Nationwide Permit 3.

Three project segments, comprising approximately 3,840 feet (0.73 miles), will cross the 100-year floodplain. Eight (8) existing Project structures in the floodplain will be replaced with new structures and foundations in the same location. Accordingly, LPO notified county and Federal emergency management agencies and published a Notice of Floodplain Action for a 15-day public comment period. No comments were received.

New structure placement will meet local and federal floodplain management requirements. The new structures will be designed to not affect base flood elevations. Work areas will be temporary and will not require modifications to site elevations. Temporary erosion controls will be installed and maintained until the work areas are restored and stabilized. Base flood elevations will not be affected by the Project.

The following permits or authorizations will be obtained prior to construction:

- State National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for “Stormwater Discharges associated with Construction Activity of Infrastructure Projects.”

Number and Title of Categorical Exclusion(s)

The Project is consistent with and covered by DOE categorical exclusions in 10 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1021, Appendix B4, Categorical Exclusions Applicable to Electric Power and Transmission. Specifically, the Project is covered by DOE Categorical Exclusion B4.13 Upgrading and Rebuilding Existing Powerlines.

B4.13 Upgrading and Rebuilding Existing Powerlines

Upgrading or rebuilding existing electric powerlines, which may involve relocations of small segments of the powerlines within an existing powerline right-of-way or within otherwise previously disturbed or developed lands (as discussed at 10 CFR 1021.410(g)(1)). Upgrading or rebuilding existing electric powerlines also may involve widening an existing powerline right-of-way to meet current electrical standards if the

widening remains within previously disturbed or developed lands and only extends into a small area beyond such as lands as needed to comply with applicable electrical standards. Covered actions would be in accordance with applicable requirements, including the integral elements listed at the start of appendix B of this part; and would incorporate appropriate design and construction standards, control technologies, and best management practices. This exclusion does not apply to underwater powerlines. As used in this categorical exclusion, “small” has the meaning discussed at 10 CFR 1021.410(g)(2).

Per 10 CFR 1021.102, application of categorical exclusions (classes of actions that normally do not require EAs or EISs), the following clarifications are provided to assist in the appropriate application of categorical exclusions that employ the terms or phrases “previously disturbed or developed” and “small” or “small- scale”:

- (1) “Previously disturbed or developed” refers to land that has been changed such that its functioning ecological processes have been and remain altered by human activity. The phrase encompasses areas that have been transformed from natural cover to nonnative species or a managed state, including, but not limited to, utility and electric power transmission corridors and rights-of-way, and other areas where active utilities and currently used roads are readily available.*
- (2) DOE considers terms such as “small” and “small-scale” in the context of the particular proposal, including its proposed location. In assessing whether a proposed action is small, in addition to the actual magnitude of the proposal, DOE considers factors such as industry norms, the relationship of the proposed action to similar types of development in the vicinity of the proposed action, and expected outputs of emissions or waste. When considering the physical size of a proposed facility, for example, DOE would review the surrounding land uses, the scale of the proposed facility relative to existing development, and the capacity of existing roads and other infrastructure to support the proposed action.*

Regulatory Requirements Defined in 10 CFR § 1021

The proposed loan guarantee for actions described above was subjected to an environmental due diligence review by DOE LPO staff to ensure consistency with the specific category of action (categorical exclusion) contained in Appendix B of 10 CFR Part 1021 and the conditions for applying categorical exclusions specified in Section 102 of Part 1021. To ensure that the requirements of Appendix B were met, LPO Environmental Compliance obtained numerous project-related documents between March and July 2025 and participated in several conference calls with GPC staff to ensure a complete understanding of the activities associated with the Project.

The environmental due diligence review determined that there is no controversy regarding the potential environmental impacts of the Project, and that the actions associated with the loan guarantee would not adversely affect any physical, biological, or socio-cultural resources

associated with the deployment of the project. The environmental due diligence review determined the Proposed Action has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion.

The Comment section below is provided for any necessary clarifications concerning the findings listed above. Signature by GPC's designated representative in the Corporate Validation section is an indication of GPC's concurrence with the findings and determinations presented above.

Comment(s)

Corporate Validation

Signature and Date:



7/21/2025

Jennifer McNelly
Vice-President, Environmental Affairs
Georgia Power Company

Determination

Based on my review of information conveyed to me and in my possession concerning the actions associated with the proposed EDF Program (EDF 1706) loan guarantee described above, as NEPA Compliance Officer (as prescribed in DOE Policy Directive 451.1), I have determined that the actions involve no extraordinary circumstances and fit within the specified category of actions in Appendix B of 10 CFR Part 1021 described above, and are hereby categorically excluded from further review under NEPA (42 United States Code 4321, as amended).

DOE will complete a review of any future projects in accordance with NEPA prior to their inclusion in the funding facility that is the subject of the DOE loan guarantee.

Signature and Date

Todd Stribley
NEPA Compliance Officer
DOE Loan Programs Office