

Record of Categorical Exclusion
for
Georgia Power Company's
Blankets Creek-Woodstock Project
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 the Georgia Power Company (GPC) pursuant to its authority under the EDF Program. In its application, GPC has identified the Blankets Creek-Woodstock Transmission Line Rebuild project (Blankets Creek-Woodstock Project or Project), in Cherokee County, Georgia, 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 Project is needed to maintain efficient and dependable power flow on the grid. Accordingly, the Proposed Action considered in this record of categorical exclusion is LPO's issuance of Federal financial support for the Blankets Creek-Woodstock Project.

Project Description

GPC proposes rebuilding a 7-mile-long segment of the existing Blankets Creek-Woodstock 115 kV transmission line, which includes the replacement of the existing conductors with higher capacity conductors and all existing structures (65) with new structures capable of supporting the new conductors. The project will enable the transmission line to operate more efficiently by reducing energy losses.

Limited ground disturbance will be included in LPO's Proposed Action. LPO's Proposed Action is limited to the replacement of individual components, transmission structures, and associated poles. As such, new ground may be disturbed to erect new poles next to the existing ones to be replaced. The replaced poles will then be removed and ground will be stabilized following removal

with permanent vegetation suitable for this area of the State of Georgia and the time of year when planting will occur. No additional right-of-way would be needed for the transmission line rebuild.

The Project will lease two previously developed laydown areas (e.g., areas previously graveled by others) for material and equipment staging. These areas are located outside of the transmission line right-of-way and will be accessed via existing paved county roadways. No new ground disturbance outside of the existing transmission line right-of-way and previously disturbed areas is planned.

The Project transmission line rebuild activities are anticipated to begin in August 2025 and would be completed in June 2026. The transmission line is expected to operate for an additional 40 years.

In accordance with the Endangered Species Act (ESA), LPO's review of the Project found that there would be *no effect* to federally listed species because there would be no ground-disturbing activities as part of LPO's Proposed Action (beyond pole replacement) and because the project will avoid suitable habitat for these species. LPO corresponded with Georgia Ecological Services Office regarding LPO's approach to ESA Section 7; USFWS does not consult on a *no effect* determination. No critical habitat has been designated within the project area.

In accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), LPO consulted with the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). As part of the Section 106 identification process, the Applicant prepared two cultural resource survey reports which were provided to the SHPO: one report for the portion of the Project located on private land, and a separate report for the portion of the Project located on U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) property along the Little River. Based on these reports and desktop research, the Georgia SHPO concurred with LPO's Finding of No Adverse Effect for this project on July 7, 2025. DOE identified and contacted thirteen (13) federally recognized Native American Indian Tribes (Tribes) that may have an interest in the Project area (Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas; Alabama-Quassarte Tribal Town; Cherokee Nation; Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana; Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians; Kialegee Tribal Town; Miccosukee Tribe of Indians; Muscogee (Creek) Nation; Poarch Band of Creek Indians; Seminole Tribe of Florida; Seminole Nation of Oklahoma; Thlopthlocco Tribal Town, and United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma). The Cherokee Nation responded on July 3, 2025, advising that it had no objections to LPO's Proposed Action. In the case of an inadvertent discovery during the course of the Project, GPC will halt all project activities in the area of the discovery, and DOE and GPC will contact the Cherokee Nation for further consultation if the inadvertent discovery includes items of cultural significance.

There are 20 streams in the project area – 7 jurisdictional intermittent streams and 13 jurisdictional perennial streams. A total of 26 State Waters (including the 20 jurisdictional streams) were identified within the survey area. In addition, approximately 2 acres of the Project is in a regulatory floodway (Zone AE) and approximately 15 acres of the Project is in a Zone A floodway. Accordingly, on July 14, 2025, DOE published a Notice of Floodplain Action for a 15-day public comment period. Additionally, LPO notified relevant county and Federal emergency management departments and Tribes with a known interest in the project area. 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 Project qualifies for coverage under USACE Nationwide Permit 3 (Maintenance) for maintenance of the existing transmission line. Of the 65 structures to be replaced, only one is within a jurisdictional wetland and will require U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permitting per Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. GPC will obtain coverage under the USACE Nationwide Permit 3 (NWP 3) for maintenance activities associated with replacing the one structure located in jurisdictional wetlands. Prior authorization from USACE, via the issuance of a NWP, will be obtained, as applicable.

Number and Title of Categorical Exclusion(s)

The actions being considered under the Proposed Action are consistent with and covered by DOE categorical exclusions in 10 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1021, Appendix B4, Categorical Exclusions Applicable to Electric Power and Transmission. This 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

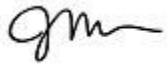
The Proposed Action was subjected to an environmental due diligence review by DOE LPO staff to ensure it is consistent with the specific category of actions (categorical exclusion) contained in Appendix B of 10 CFR Part 1021 and the conditions for applying categorical exclusions specified in Section 102 of Part 1021. To ensure the requirements of Appendix B were met, LPO staff reviewed project-related documents obtained between January 2025 and July 2025 and participated in 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 Proposed Action, and that the activities associated with the Federal financial support 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



Jennifer S. 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 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 the National Environmental Policy Act (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
Loan Programs Office