

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Western Area Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Captain-Jack-Olinda 412 Splice Repair Landing Zone

Project No.: N/A

Project Manager: Ryan Yeager

Location: Shasta County, California

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from 10 CFR 1021, Appendix B): B1.3 Routine Maintenance

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, including the Captain Jack-Olinda (CPJ-ODA) line, located in northern California. Part of this responsibility includes ensuring WAPA maintains reliable operation of the transmission system.

WAPA proposes to repair a splice on the CPJ-ODA transmission line. To aid in this process, a helicopter landing zone was selected which is off of WAPA's right-of-way (ROW). This landing zone, near tower 419, is in a previously disturbed area adjacent to a lightly-traveled forest road and has been used as a landing zone in the past.

This document examines the use of this area.

Findings:

In accordance with the requirements and guidance in 10 CFR 1021.102 and Department of Energy's (DOE) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Procedures, WAPA has determined that the proposed action:

- (1) fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021 (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.

Signed:

Name: Kristen Dalldorf

Title: Environmental Manager

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: Captain-Jack-Olinda 412 Splice Repair Landing Zone

Project Site Description

The proposed landing zone is in rural Shasta County, California. The dominant habitat surrounding the project area consists of mixed conifer, secondary-growth forest. The private land areas near tower 419 is on disturbed land near a forest road and designated as a landing zone within densely forested area (740 feet northeast of Tower 419).

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

Explanation:

The area proposed as a landing zone is located in a previously disturbed area adjacent to a road. It has been designated as a landing zone. The use of this site has no potential to affect cultural resources. Natural Resources will be contacted immediately if archeological, paleontological, or historic evidence is found.

2. Geology and Soils

Explanation:

Ground disturbance is not anticipated in this project; therefore, no impacts would occur.

3. Plants

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

Explanation:

A reconnaissance survey was completed at this site. No special-status plants are known or expected at the project site. The landing zone site is a sparsely vegetated disturbed pullout along a public road. Construction vehicles and equipment would be required to be clean before entering the project location to prevent spread or invasive weeds.

4. Wildlife

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

Explanation:

Although the project lies within the range of federally-protected northern spotted owl, the forest surrounding the project area lacks the complexity of suitable habitat for the species. WAPA conducted a survey of the project area on October 23, 2023 and found no resources of concern.

5. Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish

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

Explanation:

The project landing zone site is not near any water bodies, floodplains, or fish. No impacts would occur.

6. Wetlands

Explanation:

The project area does not have wetlands; therefore, no impacts would occur

7. Groundwater and Aquifers

Explanation:

Spill prevention measures, including secondary containment at the landing zone, will be used during operations. The project would not provide a pathway for groundwater contamination. In the event of a hazardous material/waste spill, Environment will be contacted, WAPA Dispatch notified, and the appropriate Federal, State, and local regulating authority notified depending on the type and size of the spill.

8. Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas

Explanation:

The land use would not change at the project site. Nor is the project within, or near, and specially designated areas, such as National Scenic Rivers.

9. Visual Quality

Explanation:

The visual quality would be consistent with the existing transmission right-of-way corridor and surrounding agricultural land. There would be no change to the visual quality other than temporary helicopter operations.

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. Crews would follow WAPA's standard operating procedures during the project:

AQ-SOP-1: WAPA will 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-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:

There are no residences within the project location. Helicopter noise would be temporary and would occur only during daylight hours.

12. Human Health and Safety

Explanation:

During project activities, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Project activities would not impact human health or safety.

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:

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, Appendix B

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:

Name: Kristen Dalldorf

Title: Environmental Manager