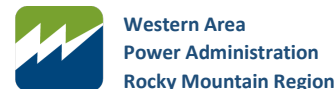


CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION



Proposed Action Title: Craig-Bonanza 345-kV, Vernal-Hayden 138-kV, and Artesia-Rangely Southwest 138-kV Transmission Line Structure Replacements, Access Road and Transmission Line Right-of-Way Maintenance, and Gate Replacements

Location: Moffat, Routt, and Rio Blanco Counties, Colorado and Uintah County, Utah

Project Number: 2022-027

Expiration Date: December 31, 2030

A. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION:

Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), Rocky Mountain Region (RMR), proposes to conduct routine access road and transmission line right-of-way (ROW) maintenance, and replace existing structures and gates on the Craig-Bonanza (CRG-BOZ) 345-kV, Vernal-Hayden (VNL-HDN) 138-kV, and Artesia-Rangely Southwest (ART-RGL) 138-kV Transmission Lines in Moffat, Routt, and Rio Blanco Counties, Colorado and Uintah County, Utah.

Routine maintenance of existing access roads, crossings, landings, and other ROW features will be completed as necessary within approved work areas to facilitate safe access to the transmission lines. Examples of routine maintenance activities that may be completed include: blading; grading; removal of rocks, vegetation, and other obstacles impeding safe travel; installation, repair, and replacement of water bars, rip-rap, and other erosion control measures; cleanout, repair, and in-kind replacement of culverts and other drainage features; washout repair; landing maintenance; installation and maintenance of gates; and soil stabilization. Equipment used for this component of the proposed action may include motor graders, bulldozers, excavators, dump trucks, compactors, skid-steers, and work trucks.

Existing wood structures that have been identified as structurally deficient will be replaced. The new transmission structures will be 5 to 10 feet taller than the existing structures and have minor structural updates to meet current WAPA design standards, but they will be visually similar to the existing structures. 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 component of the proposed action may include bucket trucks, truck-mounted augers and cranes, skid-steer loaders, utility trucks, pole trailers, and equipment trailers.

Work will occur on private lands, Colorado and Utah state lands, and public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Work will be confined to WAPA's existing access road and transmission line ROWs; no new roads are authorized constructed, and work will be focused on previously disturbed locations.

This Categorical Exclusion (CX) replaces the following CX's:

- 2020-051 Craig-Bonanza 345-kV Transmission Line Access Road and Right-of-Way Maintenance (Original Expiration Date 12/31/27)
- 2021-056 Vernal-Hayden (VNL-HDN) 138-kV Transmission Line Structure Replacements (Original Expiration Date: 12/31/26)
- 2021-058 Craig-Bonanza 345-kV and Vernal-Hayden 138-kV Transmission Line Access Road and Right-of-Way Maintenance (Original Expiration Date: 12/31/27)
- 2022-074 Vernal-Hayden (VNL-HDN) 138-kV Transmission Line Structure Replacements (Original Expiration Date: 12/31/27)
- 2024-069 Hayden-Vernal (HDN-VNL 138-kV) Structure Replacements (Original Expiration Date: 12/31/2029)

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 21, 2030.** 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 show the access roads and ROW areas approved for maintenance.** The approved works areas are as follows:

Approved Work Area #	ROWs Width	Off-ROW Access Roads Width
1	VNL-HDN (Colorado and Utah): 150 feet (75 feet on either side of the transmission line)	50 feet (25 feet on either side of the centerline) on private lands 100 feet (50 feet on either side of the centerline) on State, BLM-Little Snake Field Office (LSFO), BLM-White River Field Office (WRFO), and BLM-Vernal Field Office (VFO) lands



2	VNL-HDN (Colorado and Utah): 150 feet (75 feet on either side of the centerline)	50 feet (25 feet on either side of the centerline) on private lands 100 feet (50 feet on either side of the centerline) on State, BLM-LSFO, BLM-WRFO, and BLM-VFO lands
3	VNL-HDN (Utah): 120 feet (60 feet on either side of the centerline) VNL-HDN (Colorado): 180 feet (90 feet on either side of the centerline)	60 feet (30 feet on either side of the centerline) on private, State, and BLM-VFO lands 130 feet (65 feet on either side of the centerline) on BLM-WRFO lands
4	CRG-BOZ (Colorado and Utah): 200 feet (100 feet on either side of the centerline) *some specific structures include a 200-, 250-, or 350-foot radius	100 feet (50 feet on either side of the centerline) on private, State, BLM-LSFO, BLM-WRFO, and BLM-VFO lands
5	ART-RGL (Colorado and Utah): 80 feet (40 feet on either side of the centerline) BEA-RFL (Colorado): 150 feet (75 feet on either side of the centerline) CRG-BOZ (Colorado and Utah): 200 feet (100 feet on either side of the centerline) VNL-HDN (Colorado and Utah): 150 feet (75 feet on either side of the centerline)	50 feet (25 feet on either side of the centerline) on private lands 100 feet (50 feet on either side of the centerline) on State, BLM-LSFO, BLM-WRFO, and BLM-VFO lands

If clarification of maps is required, please contact RMR's Archaeologist at (970) 286-3523 or RMR's Natural Resource Specialist at (970) 473-5586.

- 4) **The Environmental Restrictions Area maps provided to WAPA's maintenance crews include cultural resource boundaries.** No access road maintenance or other ground disturbance is allowed within these areas. All access within these cultural resource



boundaries must be limited to existing access roads. If access road maintenance or other ground disturbance within these cultural resource boundaries is necessary, an RMR Archeologist must be contacted at (970) 302-4753, (970) 286-3523, or (970) 658-6794. No access road maintenance or other ground disturbance within these cultural resource boundaries is authorized until written notification to proceed is provided by an RMR Archaeologist.

- 5) **The Environmental Restrictions Area maps provided to WAPA's maintenance crews and/or Contractor(s) include biological resource boundaries.** Maintenance crews must adhere to the following restrictions within the biological resource boundaries to avoid and minimize disturbance to breeding and nesting greater sage-grouse.

- Work within these boundaries must be avoided between **March 1 and July 15** to prevent disturbance to breeding and nesting greater sage-grouse.

Transmission Line	Structure Number	Map Number
VNL-HDN	99-4 to 97-7	2
	93-1 to 90-2	3
	89-2 to 87-9	4
	86-3 to 85-6	5
	82-9 to 79-7	6
	77-5 to 70-8	7, 8
	66-4 to 64-7	9
	61-2 to 48-7	10, 11, 12
	47-3 to 39-1	12, 13, 14
	36-2 to 23-1	15, 16, 17
	21-9 to 17-5	18
CRG-BOZ	9-4 to 11-3	2
	16-1 to 19-1	3
	19-5 to 21-2	4
	22-5 to 23-3	5
	26-1 to 29-3	6
	31-3 to 35-4	7
	35-5 to 38-1	8
	42-4 to 44-2	9
	47-5 to 60-3	10, 11, 12
	61-4 to 70-1	12, 13, 14
	72-9 to 85-4	15, 16, 17, 19
ART-RGL	2-9 to 10-9	17, 19

- 6) **The Environmental Restrictions Area maps provided to WAPA's maintenance crews include biological resource boundaries.** Maintenance crews must adhere to the following restrictions within the biological resource boundaries to avoid and minimize disturbance to breeding and nesting greater sage-grouse:



- From **May 15 to June 30**, work should be avoided. If work must occur within this date range, contact RMR's Environment Department at least 30 days prior to initiation of the project to arrange for an on-site biological monitor to ensure avoidance of greater sage-grouse nesting activities.

Transmission Line	Structure Number	Map Number
VNL-HDN	130-5 to 129-4	1
	81-1 to 78-4	6
	78-1 to 77-5	7
	60-5 to 59-9	10
CRG-BOZ	28-1 to 30-5	6
	31-1 to 31-3	7
	48-4 to 49-1	10

- 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 Archaeologist must be contacted immediately at (970) 302-4753, (970) 286-3523, or (970) 658-6794. Work in the area of discovery must not resume until notification to proceed is provided by an RMR Archaeologist.
- 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, (970) 286-3523, or (970) 658-6794 (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) 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.
- 10) 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.
- 11) 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.
- 12) 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.



- 13) 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:

WAPA follows the regulations at 40 C.F.R. Parts 1500–1508, in addition to the Department of Energy's regulations implementing NEPA at 10 C.F.R. Part 1021 to meet the agency's obligations under NEPA, 42 U.S.C. §§ 4321 et seq.



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

Prepared by:

Gail Martinez, Natural Resource Specialist
Brian Joseph, Regional Preservation Official

