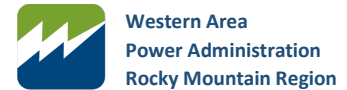


CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION



Proposed Action Title: Alcova-Copper Mountain 115-kV, Copper Mountain-Boysen 115-kV, Thermopolis-Lovel 115-kV, and Spence-Casper (PACE) 230-kV Transmission Line Optical Ground Wire Installation, Structure Replacement, Routine Access Road and Transmission Line Right-of-Way Maintenance and Laydown Yard

Location: Fremont, Hot Springs, Natrona, and Washakie Counties, Wyoming

Project Number: 2023-020 and 2025-057

Expiration Date: December 31, 2031

A. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION:

Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), Rocky Mountain Region (RMR), proposes to replace the existing overhead ground wire (OGW) with optical ground wire (OPGW), replace or repair existing structures, install spiral dampers, and conduct routine access road and transmission line right-of-way (ROW) maintenance, on Alcova-Copper (A-COP) 115-kV, Copper Mountain-Boysen (COP-B) 115-kV, Thermopolis-Lovell (TH-LV) 115-kV, and Spence-Casper ((PACE) SCE-CPL) 230-kV Transmission Lines in Fremont, Hot Springs, Natrona, and Washakie counties, Wyoming. A temporary laydown yard, located on an old gas station lot in Shoshoni, WY, will be used to store equipment, assets, and construction trailers.

The OPGW will be installed between Alcova (A) Substation and Copper Mountain (COP), between COP Substation and Boysen (B) Substation, between Thermopolis (TH) Substation and Worland Tap (WRD) and on SCE-CPL from structure 0/6 to Spence (SCE) Substation. The OPGW will not be visibly different from the existing OGW. The existing OGW will be used to pull the new OPGW into place, with pulling sites positioned at regular intervals to pull, wind, and remove the OGW, and feed, tighten, and secure the new OPGW. The individual lengths of OPGW will be spliced together at regular intervals along the spans, and permanent splice enclosures will be installed on transmission structures. Temporary or permanent anchors may be installed to support the OPGW installation. Equipment used for this project may include helicopters, manlifts, bucket trucks, wire pullers and tensioners, cranes, splicing trailers, cable reel trailers, utility trucks dozers, blades, excavators, rollers/compactors, water trucks, and skid steers.

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 line. 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, replace or installation of culverts, rock crossing, and other drainage features; washout repair; landing maintenance and installation; installation and maintenance of gates; and soil stabilization. Equipment used for this project may include motor graders, bulldozers, excavators, dump trucks, compactors, skid-steers, and work trucks.

Routine maintenance of existing structures may be completed as necessary within approved work areas. Existing wood structures that have been identified as structurally deficient will be replaced on A-COP (structures 45/7, 53/5 & 53/7) and TH-LV (structures 40/4, 10/7, 18/5, 19/6, 20/8, 21/2, 21/7, & 22/3). 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. Temporary or permanent anchors may be installed to support the structure installation. Equipment used for this project 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, Wyoming State lands, and Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) trust land of the Wind River Reservation, as well as lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM)-Casper Field Office (CSFO), BLM-Lander Field Office (BLM-LFO), BLM-Worland Field Office (WFO), and Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)-Wyoming Area Office (WAO). Work will be confined to WAPA's existing access road and transmission line ROWs; no new roads will be constructed, and work will be focused on previously disturbed locations.

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 31, 2031.** 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 and/or Contractor(s) include cultural resource boundaries.** No ground disturbance or access road maintenance is allowed within these areas. All access within these cultural resource boundaries must be limited to existing access roads. If ground disturbance within these areas is necessary, an RMR Archeologist must be contacted at (970) 302-4753, (970) 286-3523, or (970) 658-6794. No ground disturbance within these cultural resource boundaries is authorized until written notification to proceed is provided by an RMR Archeologist.
- 4) **Work on the TH-LV section may not begin until after RMR's Environmental Department gives written notice to proceed.** The 2025 government shutdown has delayed consultation on this section which is located on federal lands managed by BLM-WFO. The consultation for this section can be completed once the government shutdown ends and the BLM-WFO staff can review this project and provide feedback to WAPA. Once this consultation is completed, RMR environment will provide a written notice to proceed.



- 5) Installation of new culverts and crossings is authorized under U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) 2021 Nationwide Permit (NWP) Number 57, Electric Utility Line and Telecommunications Activities. A copy of this permit and associated conditions has been provided to WAPA's maintenance crews. If any new culverts or crossings will require disturbance of greater than 0.10-acre, RMR's Environment Department must be contacted to determine whether additional environmental review is required.
- 6) 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.
- 7) Any injured or orphaned birds and all observed active nests must be immediately reported to RMR Environment at (970) 342-6462 or (970) 473-5586. 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.
- 8) 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.
- 9) 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.
- 10) 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.
- 11) Activities involving the use of fuel, oil, hydraulic fluid, or other petroleum products must comply with RMR's Spill Response Plan (SRP).
- 12) To prevent the transport of non-native and invasive plants and animals, including noxious weeds and aquatic nuisance species, work crews must thoroughly wash all vehicles and equipment (trailers, trucks, UTVs, etc.) before entering the action area and working on the project.



C. NUMBER AND TITLE OF THE CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION BEING APPLIED:

(See text in 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D.)

B1.3 Routine maintenance

B4.7 Fiber optic cable

D. REGULATORY AND GUIDANCE IN 10 CFR 1021.102 AND DOE's NEPA IMPLEMENTING PROCEDURES: (See full text in regulation and in Implementing Procedures)

For the DOE procedures regarding categorical exclusions, including the full text of each categorical exclusion, see 10 CFR 1021.102 and Appendix B to 10 CFR Part 1021, and also Section 5.4 (Applying one or more categorical exclusions to a proposal) and Appendices B and C of DOE's National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures (June 30, 2025).

☒ The proposal fits within a class of actions that is listed in Appendix B to 10 CFR Part 1021 or Appendix B and C of DOE's NEPA Implementing Procedures (June 30, 2025).

To fit within the classes of actions listed in Appendix B to 10 CFR Part 1021, or Appendix B of DOE's NEPA Implementing Procedures, a proposal must satisfy the conditions that are integral elements of the classes of actions in Appendix B of both 10 CFR Part 1021 and DOE's NEPA Implementing Procedures.

☒ There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposal that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal. DOE or an applicant may modify the proposal to avoid reasonably foreseeable adverse significant effects such that the categorical exclusion would apply.

☒ The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion.

[Note: For proposals that fit within the categorical exclusions listed in Appendix C of DOE's NEPA Implementing Procedures, see DOE's notice of adoption for the subject Appendix C categorical exclusion for additional considerations. DOE notices of adoption for other agency categorical exclusions may be found on DOE's Section 109 webpage.]

E. DETERMINATION:

Based on my review of the proposed action, as NEPA Compliance Officer, I have determined that the proposed action fits within the specified class(es) of action, the other regulatory guidance 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:

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