



# U.S. Department of Energy

## Categorical Exclusion Determination Form

<u>Categorical Exclusion Number:</u>	CX-270904
<u>Loan Application Number:</u>	EIR0044
<u>Proposed Action Title:</u>	Parkwest to Pratt City Underground Fiber Optic Conversion Project
<u>Program of Field Office:</u>	Office of Energy Dominance Financing
<u>Location(s) (City/County/State):</u>	Alabama

Proposed Action Description:

**Description of Categorically Excluded Action**

The United States Department of Energy (DOE), Office of Energy Dominance Financing (EDF), 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 EDF Program provides loan guarantees for projects that either (1) retool, repower, repurpose or replace energy infrastructure that has ceased operations; (2) enable operating energy infrastructure to increase capacity or output; or (3) support or enable the provision of known or forecastable electric supply at time intervals necessary to maintain or enhance grid reliability or other system adequacy needs (42 U.S.C. 16517(a)(2) and Pub. L. No. 119-21, 139 Stat. 72 (July 4, 2025)).

EDF is considering whether to issue a loan guarantee of a funding facility to Alabama Power Company (APC) pursuant to its authority under the EDF Program. In its application, APC has identified the Parkwest to Pratt City Underground Fiber Optic Conversion Project (Project) for inclusion in the funding facility that is the subject of DOE’s loan guarantee. APC 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 applicable and relevant environmental statutes for these projects prior to their inclusion in the funding facility that is the subject of DOE’s loan guarantee.

**Project Description**

The Project is located in the city of Birmingham, Alabama and includes the installation of approximately 4 miles of fiber optic cable (approximately 21,120 linear feet) within existing underground conduits located within road right-of-way (ROW) for the City of Birmingham, with underground utility easements granted to APC. The Project begins at 5th Avenue North and 12th Street in the city of Birmingham, generally continuing in a westward direction spanning numerous city streets, and terminating near Avenue W and 11th Street in Birmingham (Pratt City). The Project will enhance system operational flexibility; create incremental transmission capacity, high-speed communication paths, and system automation; and increase the reliability of APC’s electrical infrastructure. The Proposed Action considered in this record of categorical exclusion is EDF’s issuance of Federal financial support for the implementation of the Project.

The Project will create a telecommunication service connection between the Pratt City Substation and the Parkwest Substation Telecommunications Hub. The Project includes installation of fiber optic conduit and cable primarily within an abandoned APC 5-inch steel cable pipe, with minimal installations of new fiber conduit where required. Eleven (11) new fiber handholes will be installed at each existing manhole location and at the Powell Substation where the existing steel cable pipe terminates.

At the Parkwest Substation, the new fiber installation will connect to an existing APC manhole located outside of Parkwest Substation and existing spare conduits will take the proposed fiber cables from the existing APC manhole into the fiber hub inside the station. All existing manholes will be accessed by core drilling through the walls. The eleven (11) new fiber handholes will be installed adjacent to the existing manholes. The proposed fiber conduit will be pulled through the core drilled openings in the manhole walls and up to handhole elevations, the existing pipe will be sealed, and the manhole will be filled.

The Project is located within Birmingham, Alabama and is a highly developed urban and metropolitan area located in north-central Alabama. The Project area is characterized by residential and commercial development, roads, parks, schools, churches



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and other typical urban facilities. The fiber conduit and cable system will create a telecommunication service connection between the Pratt City Substation and the Parkwest Substation Telecommunications Hub.

Construction will include minimal ground disturbance and will involve trenching in previously disturbed areas near the eleven (11) handhole boxes. Vegetation removal or ground disturbance outside of the existing ROW will not occur as part of the Project. No additional infrastructure (electricity, natural gas, water, or wastewater usage) will be required for the Project.

The Project is scheduled to begin construction in January 2027.

The Project route is located on existing, previously disturbed road ROW and existing APC underground utility easements and there are no impacts to any physical, biological, cultural, or socioeconomic resources. No permits or authorizations will be required prior to construction.

In accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act, EDF's review of the Project found that there would be no effect to designated critical habitat or endangered species. For the 12 Federally threatened, endangered, proposed, and candidate species with Potential to occur in the project area [tri-colored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*), gray bat (*Myotis grisescens*), Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalist*), whooping crane (*Grus americana*), alligator snapping turtle (*Macrochelys temminckii*), flattened musk turtle (*Sternotherus depressus*), monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*), black warrior waterdog (*Necturus alabamensis*), rush darter (*Etheostoma phytophilum*), watercress darter (*Etheostoma nuchale*), triangular kidneyshell (*Ptychobranthus greenii*), and ovate clubshell (*Pleurobema perovatum*)], EDF has reached a no effect determination based on 1) no in-water work or in-stream work is proposed, 2) no tree or vegetation clearing is proposed, and 3) the results of desktop studies indicating there is no suitable habitat within the Project area for these species.

In accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), LPO consulted with the Alabama State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). On January 13, 2026, the Alabama SHPO concurred with LPO's finding of No Effect to Historic Properties. DOE identified and contacted 5 federally recognized Native America Tribes (Tribes) that may have an interest in the Project area (Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas; Alabama-Quassarte Tribal Town; Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana; Muscogee (Creek) Nation; and Seminole Tribe of Florida). No comments were received during the 30-day review period of DOE's Finding of Effect-. In the event of a post-review unanticipated discovery of cultural resources and/or human remains during construction, DOE EDF 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 the discovery, pursuant to 36 CFR 800.13(b)(3).

Categorical Exclusion(s) Applied:

B4.6 - Additions and modifications to transmission facilities

B4.7 - Fiber optic cable

Categorical Exclusion(s) Description:

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 B4.6 Additions and Modifications to Transmission Facilities and B4.7 Fiber Optic Cable.

**B4.6 Additions and Modifications to Transmission Facilities**

*Additions or modifications to electric power transmission facilities within a previously disturbed or developed facility area. Covered actions include, but are not limited to, switchyard rock grounding upgrades, secondary containment projects, paving projects, seismic upgrading, tower modifications, load shaping projects (such as reducing energy use during periods of peak demand), changing insulators, and replacement of poles, circuit breakers, conductors, transformers, and crossarms.*



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### **B4.7 Fiber Optic Cable**

*Adding fiber optic cables to transmission facilities or buying fiber optic cable in existing powerline or pipeline rights-of-way. Covered actions include associated vaults and pulling and tensioning sites outside rights-of-way in nearby previously disturbed or developed areas.*

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 EDF 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, EDF Environmental Compliance obtained numerous project-related documents between August and December 2025 and participated in several conference calls with APC 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.

Signature by APC’s designated representative in the Corporate Validation section (below) is an indication of APC’s concurrence with the findings and determinations presented herein.

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).

**Requirements and guidance in 10 CFR 1021.102 and DOE’s NEPA Implementing Procedures:** (See full text in regulation and in Implementing Procedures)

- 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).



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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](#).]

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 requirements and guidance set forth above are met, and the proposed action is hereby categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

### Corporate Validation:

Applicant Signatory: Stacey Turner  
Vice President, Environmental Affairs  
Alabama Power Company

Signature: 

Date: 2/16/2026

DOE Signatory: Todd Stribley  
Director, Environmental Programs  
DOE Office of Energy Dominance  
Financing

Signature: 

Date Determined: 2/17/2026