



Categorical Exclusion Determination

Western Area Power Administration

U.S. Department of Energy



<u>Proposed Action Title:</u>	115kV Gavins Point to Yankton Junction Transmission Line Rebuild
<u>WAPA Region:</u>	Upper Great Plains
<u>Location (County/State):</u>	Yankton County / South Dakota, Cedar County / Nebraska
<u>CX Determination Number:</u>	2026-UGP-003
<u>CX Determination Expiration Date*:</u>	April 8, 2031

**CX is valid until the date above (no longer than five years from when document was signed) or completion of work started prior to the expiration of the CX Determination, unless there are substantial changes to the scope of work, location, or applicable regulations. If such changes occur prior to the expiration of the CX, the Region Environmental Program will review the analysis to ensure the CX is still applicable.*

Proposed Action Description:

Southwest Power Pool (SPP) issued a Notice to Construct to rebuild 4 miles of WAPAs existing 115kV transmission line from Gavins Point Substation to Yankton Junction Substation. The work is anticipated to be completed from October 2026 to April 2027 in Yankton County, South Dakota and Cedar County, Nebraska.

The project will include upgrading any necessary terminal equipment at associated substations and lines to increase its summer emergency rating/ampereage to improve grid stability. Depending on terminal upgrades and the conductor wire used will depend on the number of structures replaced. It is anticipated that up to 29 wooden structures would be replaced along this 4-mile corridor. The existing poles would be pulled and replacement poles would be installed on a 5' offset from the existing poles. Removal and installation of poles would use standard construction techniques, which could include cranes, hydraulic jack, auger to dig new holes (app. 3' wide x 12' deep), front end loaders, personal trucks etc. Crews are assembling new structures within the existing 75' ROW. WAPA received a Temporary License to lease two acres of adjacent privately owned land for staging and material laydown purposes necessary to perform the line rebuild and eliminate the need for WAPA to acquire new access roads. This area is located directly north of the Yankton Junction Substation. The contractor may create short access roads within and/or along the project area to complete work as needed.

WAPA will install and maintain line markers in accordance with the Avian Power Lines Interaction Committee (APLIC) guidance on project spans ≤ 500 meters from the Missouri River and ≤ 60 meters from all other surface water features within the project footprint. Equipment used for the bird diverter installation may include drones and/or cranes, and will be located along the transmission line at the standard transmission line height.

Dirt from the holes will be used to back fill around the new poles. Excess dirt will be scattered adjacent to the pole and leveled with existing topography. Disturbed areas will be restored to pre-construction conditions when work is completed. Restoration activities may include re-grading



disturbed areas to their original contour and reseeding with a regionally native seed mix where revegetation is required. Surfaces will be scored to provide for proper drainage, revegetation, and prevent erosion.

Removed materials, including replaced transmission poles and lines, will be disposed of in accordance with local and state regulations.

Environmental Requirements during Project Implementation:

- WAPA will install and maintain line markers in accordance with the Avian Power Lines Interaction Committee (APLIC) guidance on project spans ≤ 500 meters from the Missouri River and ≤ 60 meters from all other surface water features within the project footprint. See project folder, project manager, or UGP biologist for additional details.
- If construction begins during the primary nesting season (May 1 – August 1) of any year, a nest survey should be conducted for MBTA species within two weeks of the start of construction. If a nesting MBTA species is observed prior to or during construction, a suitable buffer distance will be established to avoid nest disturbance.
- WAPA will avoid all activities $\leq 660'$ from active Bald Eagle nests and ≤ 1 mile from Golden Eagle nests. Activities within these buffers would be limited to portions of the year when eggs, eaglets, and/or breeding adults are not present on the nest (traditionally September 1 – January 14).
- If a Rufa Red Knot (RRKN) bird is observed within 100 meters of the project, activities will cease immediately and delay until: A) the RRKN moves off naturally or B) the USFWS are consulted to determine when construction activities can resume.
- During construction, if a False Map Turtle is observed, it must be left in place and undisturbed from May through August.
- If temporary access roads are added, they must be located such that they do not directly impact greater than 0.1 acres of wetlands.
- If project conditions change and/or actions are anticipated to occur outside the surveyed project area, please contact UGP Environmental as additional consultation may be required.
- If Archaeological resources or human remains are discovered during construction, work will be halted within a 200-foot radius of the find to avoid further disturbance of the resources. The find will immediately be brought to the attention of UGP Regional Preservation Official or HQ Federal Preservation Officer. The resources will be evaluated and appropriate mitigation plans developed in consultation with interested Tribes and SHPO. No materials will be handled, altered, damaged, or removed from the find location by unauthorized personnel.

Categorical Exclusion(s) Applied (Number and Title):

B1.13 Pathways, short access roads, and rail lines

B4.13 Upgrading and rebuilding existing powerlines



B1.24 Property transfers

B4.11 Electric power substations and interconnection facilities

B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission facilities

Findings:

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](#) (Jun. 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 or 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. Additionally, for CXs adopted pursuant to NEPA Section 109 (see DNIP, Appendix C), the originating Federal agency's integral elements or extraordinary circumstances must be in accordance with the applicable requirements.

- 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](#).]



Determination:

Based on my review of the proposed action, 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.

WAPA Authorized Official Signature:

Gayle R. Nansel | Senior VP and Upper Great Plains Regional Manager