

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW for CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION
Rocky Mountain Region, Western Area Power Administration

Bucknum Substation Construction
Natrona County, Wyoming

A. **Brief Description of Proposal:** Western Area Power Administration (Western) is entering into an agreement with High Plains Power, Inc., (HPP) to provide a point of delivery service request and construction of a permanent substation in Township 35 North, Range 82 West, Section 18 of the Sixth Principle Meridian. High Plains Power, Inc., plans to build the substation partially within Western's existing transmission line right-of-way (ROW) easement along Western's Casper-Arminto 115-kV Transmission Line approximately 50 feet north of Structure No. 23/8. The existing Transmission Line is 115-kV capacity but operated at 69-kV. The new Substation will be located on land administered by Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and will require an Authorization for Land Use for Utility Systems on Federal Lands (Standard Form-299) from BLM. The tap and substation will occupy an area of 240 feet by 140 feet with an initial construction area of 350 feet by 250 feet. The project will require a tap pad location, fencing around the transformer and equipment structures, as well as spill containment, control, and counter measures. A wire-grounding grid would be placed approximately 3 feet below ground level under the entire substation area. There is an existing 50 foot wide ROW road access to the location and an additional access road of approximately 500 feet in length by 25 feet wide will be required. Expected duration of construction is to take 6 months with a target completion date of March 2013.

B. **Number and Title of the Categorical Exclusion Being Applied:** (See text in 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D.)

B4.11 Electric power substations and interconnection facilities

Construction or modification of electric power substations or interconnection facilities (including, but not limited to, switching stations and support facilities).

C. **Regulatory Requirements in 10 CFR 1021.410 (b):** (See full text in regulation and attached checklist.)

1) The proposed action fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix A or B to Subpart D.

For classes of actions listed in Appendix B, the following conditions are integral elements. To fit within a class, the proposal must not:

- Threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders;
- 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;
- 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;
- Have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources. An environmentally sensitive resource is typically a resource that has been identified as needing protection through Executive Order, statute, or regulation by Federal, State, or local government, or a federally recognized Indian tribe. An action may be categorically excluded if, although sensitive resources are present, the action would not have the

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potential to cause significant impacts on those resources (such as construction of a building with its foundation well above a sole-source aquifer or upland surface soil removal on a site that has wetlands). Environmentally sensitive resources include, but are not limited to, those listed in paragraph B. (4) (see Attachment A).

- 2) There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposal that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal.
- 3) 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.

D. Special Stipulations Pertaining to the Proposal:

If the scope of work of this project changes, Western’s Environmental Division must be contacted for additional environmental review.

This Categorical Exclusion is valid for the 2012/2013 field season after the signature date. If construction has not commenced within that time, Western’s Environmental Division must be contacted for an updated environmental review prior to construction.

If any cultural materials are discovered during construction, work in the area shall halt immediately, Western and the Wyoming SHPO staff shall be contacted, and the material be evaluated by an archaeologist or historian meeting the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualification Standards (48 FR 22716, Sept. 1983).

All equipment used must be cleaned prior to use in the area to prevent transporting of invasive plant or noxious weed seeds.

Specific Conservation Measures include:

Avian surveys were completed in 2012. Ground disturbing and vegetation-clearing activities should occur prior to migratory birds moving into the area in spring of 2013. However, if, during construction, an avian nest is discovered during the breeding and nesting season, HPP would avoid construction within at least 200 feet of nest sites until 7 days post-hatching.

HPP would design and construct the substation and tap in conformance with *Suggested Practices for Protection of Raptors on Powerlines: the State of the Art in 1996* (Avian Power Line Interaction Committee 1996) to eliminate the potential for raptor electrocution. HPP would install bird flight diverters, as deemed necessary by Western, to mitigate the potential for future raptor collisions.

HPP shall exercise care to preserve the natural landscape and shall conduct construction operations to prevent any unnecessary destruction, scarring, or defacing of the natural surroundings in the vicinity of the work. Except where clearing is required for permanent works, approved

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construction roads, or excavation operations, vegetation shall be preserved and shall be protected from damage by Western's construction operations and equipment.

HPP shall implement the proposed Project Construction and Mitigation Measures found in their "Bucknum Tap Substation Environmental Report and Environmental Laws Review Report, July 2012" compiled by their contractor, ESC Engineering.

Construction will be in compliance with the Wyoming General Stormwater Construction Permit for Small Construction Projects. The applicant will supply Western Environmental with a copy of the permit when acquired.

- E. Determination:** Based on my review of information provided to me and in my possession concerning the proposed action, I determined that the proposed action fits within the specified class of actions, the other regulatory requirements set forth above are met, and the proposed action is categorically excluded from requirements for an EA or an EIS.



Signature

Date: 9/28/12

Gene Iley, Jr.
NEPA Compliance Officer
Rocky Mountain Customer Service Region
Western Area Power Administration

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ATTACHMENT A

**Conditions That Are Integral Elements of the Classes
of Actions in Appendix B That Apply to This Proposal**

Checklist for Categorical Exclusion Determination, revised Nov. 2011

Application of Categorical Exclusions (1021.410)	Disagree	Agree	Unknown
(b)(1) The proposal fits within a class of actions that is listed in appendix B to subpart D.		X	
(b)(2) There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposal that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal, including, but not limited to, scientific controversy about the environmental effects of the proposal; uncertain effects or effects involving unique or unknown risks; and unresolved conflicts concerning alternate uses of available resources.		X	
(b)(3) The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion. Segmentation can occur when a proposal is broken down into small parts in order to avoid the appearance of significance of the total action. The scope of a proposal must include the consideration of connected and cumulative actions, that is, the proposal is not connected to other actions with potentially significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.25(a)(1)), is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)), and is not precluded by 40 CFR 1506.1 or § 1021.211 of this part concerning limitations on actions during EIS preparation.		X	
B. Conditions that are Integral Elements of the Classes of Actions in Appendix B.	NO	YES	Unknown
(1) Threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders.	X		
(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;	X		
(3) 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;	X		
(4) Have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources. An environmentally sensitive resource is typically a resource that has been identified as needing protection through Executive Order,	X		

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statue, or regulation by Federal, state, or local government, or a federally recognized Indian tribe. An action may be categorically excluded if, although sensitive resources are present, the action would not have the potential to cause significant impacts on those resources (such as construction of a building with its foundation well above a sole-source aquifer or upland surface soil removal on a site that has wetlands). Environmentally sensitive resources include, but are not limited to:			
(i) Property (such as sites, buildings, structures, and objects) of historic, archaeological, or architectural significance designated by a Federal, state, or local government, or property determined to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places;	X		
(ii) Federally-listed threatened or endangered species or their habitat (including critical habitat) or Federally-proposed or candidate species or their habitat (Endangered Species Act); state-listed or state-proposed endangered or threatened species or their habitat; Federally-protected marine mammals and Essential Fish Habitat (Marine Mammal Protection Act; Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act); and otherwise Federally-protected species (such as under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act or the Migratory Bird Treaty Act);	X		
(iii) Floodplains and wetlands (as defined in 10 CFR 1022.4, —Compliance with Floodplain and Wetland Environmental Review Requirements: “Definitions,” or its successor);	X		
(iv) Areas having a special designation such as Federally- and state-designated wilderness areas, national parks, national monuments, national natural landmarks, wild and scenic rivers, state and Federal wildlife refuges, scenic areas (such as National Scenic and Historic Trails or National Scenic Areas), and marine sanctuaries;	X		
(v) Prime or unique farmland, or other farmland of statewide or local importance, as defined at 7 CFR 658.2(a), —Farmland Protection Policy Act: Definitions, or its successor;	X		
(vi) Special sources of water (such as sole-source aquifers, wellhead protection areas, and other water sources that are vital in a region); and	X		
(vii) Tundra, coral reefs, or rain forests; or	X		

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(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.	X		
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