

Project title: **Grapevine Pass Communication Project**

Requested By: Michael Prowatzke

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Date Submitted: 3-17-2016

Date Required: 3-22-2016

**Description of the Project**

The Western Area Power Administration (Western), Sierra Nevada Region (SNR), in cooperation with the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), is proposing to relocate a repeater at Sites to an existing unused communication tower at Grapevine Pass to improve radio coverage. Five antennas at Maxwell and five at Sites would be removed from the towers; two VHF antennas would be installed on an existing tower at Grapevine Pass. A microwave dish would be installed at each of the three locations, with two dishes installed on the Sites tower. Towers at Sites and Maxwell are in use and do not require modification, but the Grapevine Pass site has not been used for many years and requires some minor work: a blue oak tree which has grown into the tower would be removed, and minor ground disturbance may occur for the installation of a 4" diameter pole and a concrete landing for a ladder. Clearing of vegetation up to 50 feet from the infrastructure to create a fire-safe perimeter is also proposed. Radio equipment would be installed within existing buildings at all three sites, but would not require any modifications to the buildings.

**Map(s)**

See attached Maps

**Figures(s)**

See attached Figures

**Work Order Number - 100342224**

To be completed by Natural Resources Only

**Action taken**

Note: All Documentation is Attached

**Categorical Exclusion (CX)**

**Environmental Assessment (EA)**

**Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)**

**Other Determinations:**

**Integral Elements**

**NEPA Attachment Sheet**

**Environmental Requirements/Mitigation**

**Maps/Figures**

**Determination:** Based on my review of information provided to me concerning the proposed action as NEPA Compliance Officer, I have determined that the proposed action meets the requirements for the categorical exclusion listed above. Therefore, I have determined that the proposed action may be categorically excluded from further NEPA review and documentation.

  
Gerald Robbins, Natural Resource Manager

**Date Approved** 3/21/2016

bcc:	File Code:	Assigned to: Michael Prowatzke	Project #: 100342224	Environmental Specialist- Date: Michael Prowatzke 3-17-2016
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Western Area Power Administration Sierra Nevada Region	<b>CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION (CX) DETERMINATION</b>	Project Number 100342224
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Integral Elements

**Project Title: Grapevine Pass Communication Project**

**Category of Action:**

- **B1.19: Microwave, meteorological, and radio towers**

Siting, construction, modification, operation, and removal of microwave, radio communication, and meteorological towers and associated facilities, provided that the towers and associated facilities would not be in a governmentally designated scenic area (see B(4)(iv) of this appendix) unless otherwise authorized by the appropriate governmental entity.

**Regulatory Requirements for a Categorical Exclusion Determination:** The Department of Energy (DOE), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Implementing Procedures, 10 CFR 1021.410(b) require the following determinations be made in order for a proposed action to be categorically excluded (see full text in regulation).

1. The proposed action fits within a class of action listed in Appendices A and B to Subpart D. For classes of actions listed in Appendix B, the following conditions are integral elements; i.e., to fit within a class, the proposal must not:
  - a. Threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, including requirements of DOE and/or Executive Orders;
  - b. Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities, but may include categorically excluded facilities;
  - c. 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 un-permitted releases; or
  - d. 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 Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B;
  - e. 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 listed in paragraph B(5) of 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B.
2. There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposal which may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal;

3. The proposal has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion. The proposal is not connected 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 10 CFR 1021.211 concerning limitations on actions requiring preparation of an environmental impact statement.

**Results of Review:** In accordance with DOE environmental regulations (10 CFR 1021), The Western Area Power Administration (Western) has reviewed the proposed action in terms of the level of NEPA review needed. Based on this review, Western has determined the proposal is encompassed within a class of action listed in Appendix B to Subpart D (10 CFR 1021.410) which do not require preparation of either an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA).

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.



**Western Area Power Administration,  
SIERRA NEVADA REGION  
NEPA Attachment Sheet**

Project Number  
100342224

**PROJECT TITLE:**

**Grapevine Pass Communication Project**

**AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

The project area is located on an unnamed ridge southeast of Grapevine Pass near Lodoga, in Colusa County, CA. The elevation is approximately 2262'. The vegetation is mixed chaparral, blue oak, and non-native grassland, and is highly dependent on aspect.

**REVIEW ACTION**

Habitat type within the substation was compared to the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife sensitive species lists for species that may occur in the area. Based on habitat type within and around the site, it is possible, though unlikely, that the endangered Keck's checker-mallow (*Sidalcea keckii*) could occur within the project area at Grapevine Pass. As such, project areas will be surveyed prior to work and/or monitored during ground disturbance and vegetation activities. Migratory Bird Treaty Act restrictions must be adhered to and are detailed below.

**CULTURAL AND HISTORIC RESULTS**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The two buildings at the Grapevine Repeater Site do not meet the definition of historic properties pursuant to 36 CFR Part 60.4. They are utilitarian type structures composed of cinder block material. The USBR building was constructed in 1985 and the joint USBR/WAPA building in 1992 making them both less than 50 years of age. These are standard communication structure sites for transmission lines. The area already consists of a high communication tower and a high radio tower. The buildings have numerous outside utility boxes and attachment for electrical connections. There is also an existing ladder on one of the buildings. The plans and profiles of the site reveal numerous underground trenching in several areas to run electrical conduits to the buildings. These conduits come up out the ground or on top of the buildings and attach to the buildings. Given the extensive ground disturbance to the area it is unlikely that the insertion of a four inch diameter pole would disturb any cultural resources. The surface area was graded prior to construction and possibly some ground leveling occurred (grading) as the site is on a flattened hill. A small concrete pad already is in place. This O&M activity is covered by the Programmatic Agreement defined below. No further cultural considerations are required for the project as it is currently defined.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consultation on this project was completed on:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	This action is covered by Western's Programmatic Agreement, "Programmatic Agreement Among the Western Area Power Administration, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and the California State Historic Preservation Officer Concerning Emergency and Routine Maintenance Activities and Other Routine Activities at Western Facilities in California," revised March, 2010.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mitigation required: None
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Include in Western's annual report

**BIOLOGICAL RESULTS**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p>Studies conducted, in order to evaluate potential impacts of the proposed project on special status species and/or their habitats, included background research to determine which special-status species and their habitats may occur within the project area and a review of habitat types in the project area. Site surveys for nesting birds and for special status species as appropriate will occur prior to additional ground disturbing activities. Avoidance measures for migratory birds are detailed below.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Mitigation required (see below)</p>

**COMPLIANCE RESULTS**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Recycled Materials Quantities:</b> All materials generated from the project that can be recycled, shall be recycled. Submit quantities of all recycled material by category to the COR within 30 days of recycling and prior to submittal of final invoice. Record quantities of material by category that is salvaged, recycled, reused, or reprocessed.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Disposal of Waste Material:</b> Dispose or recycle waste material in accordance with applicable Federal, State, and local regulations and ordinances. Coordinate with COR regarding sampling and signatures on manifests for wastes materials if required. Submit quantities of total project waste material disposal as listed below to the COR prior to submittal of final invoice.</p> <p>(1) Unregulated Wastes (i.e., trash): Volume in cubic yards or weight in pounds.</p> <p>(2) Hazardous or Universal Wastes: Weight in pounds.</p> <p>(3) PCB Wastes (If applicable): Weight in pounds.</p> <p>(4) Other regulated wastes (e.g., lead-based paint or asbestos): Weight in pounds (specify type of waste in report).</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Pollutant Spill Prevention, Notification, and Cleanup:</b> The Spill Prevention, Notification, and Cleanup Plan is expected to be a brief description of the measures taken by the contractor to prevent spills, to notify in the event of a spill, to train personnel, and to describe the company's commitment of manpower, equipment, and material which would be mobilized in the event of a spill. The plan should describe those elements in proportion to the risks posed by the project. This not intended to be the Spill Prevention, Control and Countermeasures Plan, as specified in 40 CFR 112. Those plans are required by law for facilities with <math>\geq 1320</math> gallons of oil storage.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Prevention of Air Pollution:</b> Federal law requires the protection of air quality under the Clean Air Act. All activities on this project shall be compliant with Federal, State, and local regulations. In particular, California Air Resources Board regulations apply to diesel equipment and trucks as well as fleets of large spark ignition equipment.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>Prevention of Greenhouse Gas Emissions:</b> Federal law requires the reporting of emissions under the Greenhouse Gas Regulation 40CFR98. All emissions of sulfur hexafluoride on this project shall be reported to Natural Resources. Installation and maintenance of equipment containing sulfur hexafluoride or any other greenhouse gas shall be in accordance with management practices designed to eliminate emissions.</p>

<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Prevention of Water Pollution:</b> Federal law requires the protection of water quality under the Clean Air Act. The project is exempt from the General Permit for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Construction and Land Disturbance Activities issued by the California State Water Board because it consists of routine maintenance activities in an existing right of way, and because the proposed staging areas occurring outside that existing right of way measure collectively less than one acre. Construction activities must therefore remain strictly within the boundaries specified in the plans in order to qualify for this exemption. Best management practices will be used to control runoff from the project areas.
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**MITIGATION**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Mitigation: Not Required
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Western Area Power Administration Sierra Nevada Region	Environmental Requirements for the Grapevine Pass Communication Project	Project Number 100342224
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**ITEMS CHECKED ARE APPLICABLE TO THIS PROJECT.**

**General**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, migratory bird species and their nests and eggs are protected from injury or death. Impacts to migratory bird nests shall be avoided during the nesting season (January 1 to September 15). If project activities occur during the nesting season, Western will survey the project area for migratory bird nests prior to project activities and establish appropriate buffers around any active nests that may potentially be disturbed. If work must be conducted within these buffers, a Western supplied biological monitor will be on site for project activities within the buffers. If the biological monitor determines that activities are likely to cause nest impacts or nest abandonment, then project activities in the area shall be postponed or adjusted until nestlings have fledged, the nest is no longer active, or the activities are not likely to cause nest impacts or nest abandonment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Routine maintenance activities will be avoided from mid-March through mid-June in the vicinity of structures.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Road maintenance operations will be conducted to minimize soil erosion. The United States Forest Service's Best Management Practices, Forest Practices, and Forest Practices Rules of the California Department of Forestry will be implemented where practical.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Culverts will be sized to match storms that may occur during the life of the road to minimize the potential for access road washouts under high intensity storms.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Excavated material will not be stock piled or deposited on or near stream banks, lake shorelines, or other water course perimeters where they could be washed away by high water or storm run-off or could significantly impact the water course.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vegetative management plans will be followed as appropriate.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	In areas where excavation is not required, vegetation will be left in place whenever possible and original contours maintained in an undisturbed condition.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Habitat diversity will be maintained to the greatest extent feasible.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Brush blades will be used on bulldozers in clearing operations where such use will help preserve the cover crop of grass, low-growing brush, etc.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dispose of all cleared vegetation in an appropriate manner.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The biologist will determine whether a sensitive habitat is present at the maintenance site. If special status species are identified in the area, maintenance will receive approval from Natural Resources prior to initiating any maintenance.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Natural Resources will be contacted immediately: a. If there is a "take" of a special status species or action affecting their critical habitat, and/or b. If archeological, paleontological, or historic evidence is found.
<input type="checkbox"/>	No paint or permanent discoloring agents will be applied to rocks or vegetation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If used, survey stakes will be removed as a part of the final clean up.
<input type="checkbox"/>	All work on access and maintenance roads must stay within the existing prism of the roads.

**Threatened and Endangered Species**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Federal law prohibits the taking of endangered, threatened, proposed or candidate wildlife and plants, and destruction or adverse modification of designated Critical Habitat. Federal law also prohibits the taking of birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act. "Take" means to pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect a protected animal or any part thereof, or attempt to do any of those things.
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<input type="checkbox"/>	Known Occurrence of Protected Species or Habitat: Following issuance of the notice to proceed, and prior to the start of construction, Western will provide training to all contractor and subcontractor personnel involved in the construction activity. Untrained personnel shall not be allowed in the construction area. Western will provide two sets of drawings showing known sensitive areas located on or immediately adjacent to the transmission line right-of-way and/or facility. These areas shall be considered avoidance areas. Prior to any construction activity, the avoidance areas shall be marked on the ground in a manner approved by the COR. If access is absolutely necessary, the contractor shall first obtain permission from the COR, noting that a Western and/or other government or tribal agency biologist may be required to accompany personnel and equipment. Ground markings shall be maintained through the duration of the contract. Western will remove the markings during or following final inspection of the project.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Unknown Occurrence of Protected Species or Habitat: If evidence of a protected species is found in the project area, the contractor shall immediately notify the COR and provide the location and nature of the findings. The contractor shall stop all activity in the vicinity of the protected species or habitat and not proceed until directed to do so by the COR.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Prior to the start of project activities, all personnel will participate in environmental awareness training which will inform them of the sensitive habitats within the project area, the species that have the potential to occur in the project area, and the avoidance and minimization measures that are to be adhered to during project activities. Any new crew members that start after project activities have started will be given the environmental awareness training prior to starting work on site.
<input type="checkbox"/>	General Mitigation/Avoidance Measures: The Contractor shall follow all species specific conservation measures listed below as applicable to each site, in coordination with Western's Natural Resources Point of Contact (POC) and the COR.

### Perennial Streams and Rivers

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The following activities will be prohibited at all times within 100 feet of a seep, spring, pond, lake, river, stream, or marsh, and their associated habitats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vehicle access, except on existing access and maintenance roads, unless approved by Natural Resources</li> <li>• Dumping, stockpiling, or burying of any material, except as required for specific O&amp;M activities (e.g., rip-rap)</li> <li>• Mixing of pesticides, herbicides, or other potentially toxic chemicals</li> <li>• Open petroleum products</li> </ul> <p>Equipment will be stored, fueled, and maintained in a vehicle staging area 300 feet or the maximum distance possible from any seep, spring, pond, lake, river, stream, marsh, or their associated habitats. Vehicles will be inspected daily for fluid leaks before leaving the staging area.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	All spills of fuel or hydraulic fluid would be immediately cleaned up according to Western's guidelines for hazardous material handling.

### Compliance Regulatory Requirements

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No violations of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, including requirements of DOE and/or Executive Orders will be permitted.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	There will be no uncontrolled or un-permitted releases of hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, or petroleum and natural gas products to avoid Adversely affecting environmentally sensitive resources.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	In the event of a Hazardous Material/Waste spill Natural Resources and the COR will be contacted, dispatch notified, and the appropriate Federal, State, and local regulating authority notified depending on the type and size of the spill (For further guidance, please see Natural Resources).
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hazardous Materials/Waste on-site to consider: Fueling of equipment; In the right of way, place spill drip pans (or similar) below fueling areas, spill kit and tools available nearby to stop the flow of fuel spills, and



<input type="checkbox"/>	employees trained in spill response.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hazardous Materials/Waste need to be removed off site for disposal/recycling
<input type="checkbox"/>	Piping and oil sampling required
<input type="checkbox"/>	Material Analytical Data: See attached results for reference
<input type="checkbox"/>	Erosion control measures to be taken to prevent sediment from reaching river
<input type="checkbox"/>	Soil Sampling