

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

Vernal Substation and Communication Site
Stage 03 Construction and Interconnection
Uintah County, Utah
Project Number: 2018-070
Expiration Date: December 31, 2022

A. Brief Description of Proposal: Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), Rocky Mountain Region (RMR), proposes to approve an interconnection request from PacifiCorp (dba Rocky Mountain Power, RMP) for WAPA's Vernal (VNL) Substation and Vernal (VNL) Communication Site. PacifiCorp will construct a new 0.3-mile, 138-kV transmission line from RMP's Naples Substation to WAPA's VNL Substation. An all-dielectric self-supporting (ADSS) fiber optic cable will also be installed on the new 138-kV transmission line. The fiber optic cable will be routed overhead from RMP's Naples Substation to just outside the VNL Substation fence, then will transition to a buried installation within conduit into the VNL Communication Site. At the VNL Substation, the new RMP 138-kV line will interconnect to a new 138-kV line bay, designated Y2. The buildout for the Y2 line bay, referred to as VNL Stage 03 construction, will occur in an existing empty bay and will not require any alterations to WAPA's property boundary. The buildout will involve the installation of a new 138-kV power circuit breaker, 138-kV coupling capacitor voltage transformer, 138-kV current transformers, and 138-kV disconnecting switches. A new WAPA-owned boundary meter will also be installed. To facilitate the installation of this equipment, new concrete foundations, precast concrete cable trench, and anchor bolts will need to be installed, as well as the associated bus system, grounding system, conduit system, insulated conductors and cables, terminal boxes, control panels, lighting units, and substation signs. All substation work will be confined to the existing fenced perimeter of the VNL Substation. The transmission line construction and fiber optic cable installation will occur on new RMP easement across private land, and on WAPA's property associated with the VNL Substation and Communication Site. Once all new equipment and associated systems are installed, the VNL Substation and Communication Site work areas will be regraded and graveled as necessary, and the private property construction area will be restored to the landowners' satisfaction. Existing access roads and overland routes will be used for construction and permanent access; no new roads will be constructed.

This Categorical Exclusion (CX) replaces the original CX issued August 9, 2019, with an original expiration date of December 31, 2022. The proposed action has been updated to reflect new information; no changes have been made to the Special Stipulations (Section B, below).

B. Special Stipulations Pertaining to the 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, 2022.** 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.

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- 3) Any injured or orphaned birds, and all active nest relocations, must be immediately reported to the RMR Avian Protection Lead at (970) 593-8803. Any dead birds must be reported to the RMR Avian Protection Lead 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.
- 4) Transmission line and substation components must be designed and constructed in conformance with the most current editions of *Suggested Practices for Avian Protection on Power Lines* and *Reducing Avian Collisions with Power Lines*, both published by the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC), to minimize avian collision and electrocution risk while maintaining safe and reliable electrical service.
- 5) 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 RMR's Archaeologist must be contacted immediately at (970) 461-7563. Work in the area of discovery must not resume until notification to proceed is provided by RMR's Archaeologist.
- 6) 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 RMR's Archaeologist must be notified immediately at (970) 461-7563 (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 RMR's Archaeologist.
- 7) Installation of equipment in substations must conform to WAPA's requirements and must be approved by WAPA. Oil-filled equipment, including bushings, must not contain polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB). In addition, oil-filled equipment must be permanently labeled by the manufacturer as No-PCB. Certification must be provided to RMR's Environment Department at or before the time of installation. Oil-filled equipment may require an oil spill containment system to comply with federal or state regulations.
- 8) Activities involving the use of fuel, oil, hydraulic fluid, or other petroleum products must comply with RMR's Spill Response Plan (SRP), which RMP has adopted for this action.

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- 9) WAPA Maintenance Staff or the Contractor, as applicable, must record quantities of SF₆, including:
- a) Nameplate capacity in pounds of SF₆ gas containing equipment;
 - b) Pounds of SF₆ gas stored in containers, before transferring into energized equipment;
 - c) Pounds of SF₆ gas left in containers, after transferring into energized equipment;
 - d) Pounds of SF₆ gas purchased from equipment manufactures or distributors; and
 - e) Pounds of SF₆ gas returned to suppliers.

Scales used to weigh cylinders must be accurate to within +/- 2 pounds and must have current calibration sticker.

- 10) 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.
- 11) Pesticide and herbicide applicators must meet all state licensing requirements and must follow all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines. Applicators must use only EPA-registered pesticides and herbicides that are approved for the intended use and location, and must follow all applicable label directions.

C. 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

D. Regulatory Requirements in 10 CFR Part 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;

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- 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 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.

E. Determination: Based on my review of information provided to me and in my possession concerning the proposed action, I have 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 and Date

Brian Little
NEPA Compliance Officer
Rocky Mountain Customer Service Region
Western Area Power Administration

Prepared by: Andrea Severson

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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, 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 potential to cause significant impacts on those resources (such as construction of a building with its foundation well	X		

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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		
(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		