

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

**Poncha Switchyard**  
**Stage 04**  
**Chaffee County, Colorado**  
***Project Number: 2020-057***  
***Expiration Date: December 31, 2023***

**A. Brief Description of Proposal:** Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), Rocky Mountain Region (RMR), proposes to complete Stage 04 maintenance at its Poncha (PON) Switchyard in Chaffee County, Colorado. The Stage 04 maintenance includes geologic investigations, removal of three (3) oil-filled 230-kV power circuit breakers (JV2A, JV2B, and JV6B) and associated foundations, replacement with three (3) SF<sub>6</sub> gas 245-kV power circuit breakers on new foundations, disposal of approximately 5,175 gallons of oil, ground grid upgrades, replacement of bus jumpers, and modification to the existing rigid bus with jumpers and associated electrical equipment. Drainage improvements will also be completed outside of the substation fence, including excavation of a diversion ditch, placement of riprap on ditch slopes, limited grading work, and replacement of existing 24-inch culverts with 36-inch culverts. Work will occur on federal lands managed by WAPA, and within WAPA's existing Curecanti-Poncha (CCI-PON) and Poncha-Canon City West (PON-CCW) 230-kV Transmission Line rights-of-way (ROW) on private lands. Existing access routes will be used and no road maintenance or new road construction will occur.

**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, 2023.** 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.
- 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) 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 an RMR Archaeologist must be contacted immediately at (970) 286-3523 or (970) 302-4753. Work in the area of discovery must not resume until written notification to proceed is provided by an RMR Archaeologist.
- 5) 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 an RMR Archaeologist must be notified immediately at (970) 286-3523 or (970) 302-4753 (no later than 24 hours from the time of discovery). A reasonable effort must be made to protect the remains

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from looting and/or further damage. Work in the area of discovery must not resume until written notification to proceed is provided by an RMR Archaeologist.

- 6) 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.
- 7) Activities involving the use of fuel, oil, hydraulic fluid, or other petroleum products must comply with RMR's Poncha Springs Substation Spill Prevention, Control, and Countermeasure (SPCC) Plan. Additional copies of this SPCC Plan may be obtained by contacting RMR's Environment Department.
- 8) All dielectric fluids and electrical equipment must be disposed of or recycled in accordance with current Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) and Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) regulations.
- 9) WAPA Maintenance Staff or the Contractor, as applicable, must record quantities of SF<sub>6</sub> into Maximo, including:
  - a) Nameplate capacity in pounds of SF<sub>6</sub> gas containing equipment;
  - b) Pounds of SF<sub>6</sub> gas stored in containers, before transferring into energized equipment;
  - c) Pounds of SF<sub>6</sub> gas left in containers, after transferring into energized equipment;
  - d) Pounds of SF<sub>6</sub> gas purchased from equipment manufactures or distributors; and
  - e) Pounds of SF<sub>6</sub> gas returned to suppliers.

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

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

B4.6 Additions and modifications to transmission 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:

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- 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 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 Part 1506.1 or 10 CFR Part 1021.211.

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- 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.

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Signature and Date

James Wood  
NEPA Compliance Officer  
Rocky Mountain Region  
Western Area Power Administration

Prepared by:  
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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

<b>Application of Categorical Exclusions (1021.410)</b>	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 Part 1508.25(a)(1)), is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts (40 CFR Part 1508.27(b)(7)), and is not precluded by 40 CFR Part 1506.1 or § 1021.211 of this part concerning limitations on actions during EIS preparation.		X	
<b>B. Conditions that are Integral Elements of the Classes of Actions in Appendix B.</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 above a sole-source	X		

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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 Part 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 Part 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		