

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Western Area Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: Olinda Tracy Conductor Repair Tower 166-1 Landing Zone

Project No.: 100153025

Project Manager: James Hill

Location: Solano County

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D. 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B1.3 Routine maintenance

Description of the Proposed Action:

Western Area Power Administration, Sierra Nevada Region (WAPA) is responsible for the operation and maintenance of several federally owned and operated transmission lines throughout California, including Olinda Tracy line (ODA-TCY), located in northern California from Tracy to Olinda substations. Part of this responsibility includes ensuring WAPA maintains reliable access to transmission towers and other facilities to comply with the National Electric Safety Code, Western States Coordinating Council, and WAPA directives for protecting human safety and maintaining the reliable operation of the transmission system.

WAPA proposes to replace a conductor on one span of its ODA-TCY transmission line, at Tower 166/1. The failed component was identified during a recent aerial surveillance patrol. WAPA has limited discretion on repairing this component in a timely manner. This task is expected to take less than one day.

To accomplish this task, WAPA intends to use a helicopter landing zone approximately 500 feet northwest of the WAPA right-of-way (ROW) within a disturbed area at the end of the dirt access road. This document examines the use of this area for this project.

Findings:

In accordance with Section 1021.410(b) of the Department of Energy's (DOE) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Regulations (57 FR 15144, Apr. 24, 1992, as amended at 61 FR 36221-36243, Jul. 9, 1996; 61 FR 64608, Dec. 6, 1996, 76 FR 63764, Nov. 14, 2011), WAPA has determined that the proposed action:

- (1) fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B of 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D (see attached Environmental Checklist);
- (2) does not present any extraordinary circumstances that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; and
- (3) has not been segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion.

Based on these determinations, WAPA finds that the proposed action is categorically excluded from further NEPA review.

Signed: Latisha M.
Saare

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Attachment: Environmental Checklist

Categorical Exclusion Environmental Checklist

This checklist documents environmental considerations for the proposed project and explains why the project would not have the potential to cause significant impacts on environmentally sensitive resources and would meet other integral elements of the applied categorical exclusion.

Proposed Action: Olinda Tracy Conductor Repair Tower 166-1 Landing Zone

Project Site Description

The proposed project area is in Solano County, California.

This site consists of a gravel covered disturbed area, surrounded by grassland used for livestock grazing. The site was formerly used for an oil and gas well complex that has been removed and no capped wellhead is visible.

Equipment staging areas would be the road and within the ROW.

Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

Environmental Resource Impacts	No Potential for Significance	No Potential for Significance, with Conditions
1. Historic and Cultural Resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Explanation:

A cultural resources survey of the proposed landing zone and surrounding 2.5 acres was conducted. No historic properties or cultural resources sites were identified. The site is a former oil and gas well as part of the Rio Vista Oil and Gas field. The operations and maintenance at Tower 166/1 would not impact cultural resources. No ground disturbance is required. Natural Resources will be contacted immediately if archeological, paleontological, or historic evidence is found.

2. **Geology and Soils**



Explanation:

Ground disturbance is not anticipated in this project; therefore, no impacts would occur.

3. **Plants** (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)



Explanation:

No special-status plants are known or expected in the project area.

4. **Wildlife** (including Federal/state special-status species and habitats)



Explanation:

No special status wildlife is known or expected in the project area. A biological survey was conducted on July 15, 2022. No nests were observed on towers in the range of Towers 166/3 through 164/3 and no biological concerns were observed near the proposed landing zone. Livestock are present in the area and there are temporary gates and corrals.

For the protection of migratory birds, if planned activities occur between March 1 and August 15, nesting bird surveys will be required prior to project activities. If a nest is detected, an appropriate buffer will be marked in which all O&M activities and herbicide applications will be prohibited from March 1 to August 15 or until nestlings have fledged. A standard nest buffer of 50 feet (250 feet for raptors) will be used, unless otherwise indicated by the surveying biologist. Nesting surveys can be conducted up to 3 weeks prior to project activities.

5. **Water Bodies, Floodplains, and Fish** (including Federal/state special-status species, ESUs, and habitats)



Explanation:

The project area and adjacent areas do not have any water bodies, floodplains, or fish; therefore, no impacts would occur.

6. **Wetlands**
Explanation:



The project area does not have wetlands; therefore, no impacts would occur.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**
Explanation:



Spill prevention measures would be utilized during construction activities. The project would not provide a pathway for groundwater contamination.

8. **Land Use and Specially-Designated Areas**
Explanation:



The land use would not change at the project site. Nor is the project within, or near, any specially designated areas, such as National Scenic Rivers.

9. **Visual Quality**
Explanation:



The visual quality would be consistent with the existing use of the transmission right-of-way corridor. There would be no significant change to the visual quality.

10. **Air Quality**
Explanation:



A small amount of dust and vehicle emissions would occur during the conductor repair. The helicopter would operate for a few hours with 2-3 take-off and landings. Emissions were modeled and do not exceed the daily thresholds in lbs/day for the Yolo-Solano AQMD. Results in lbs/day for each pollutant are shown below:

ROG CO NOX SOX PM 10 PM 2.5
13.54 16.88 20.44 3.04 10.52 1.59

The following relevant SOPs were adopted by WAPA to support the state implementation plan to restore air quality in the region.

AQ-SOP-1: The Contractor will adhere to all applicable requirements of those agencies having jurisdiction over air quality matters, and any necessary permits for O&M will be obtained.

AQ-SOP-2: Machinery and vehicles will be kept in good operating condition and older equipment will be replaced with equipment meeting applicable emission standards; appropriate emissions-control equipment will be maintained for vehicles and equipment, per EPA and/or WAPA air-emission requirements.

AQ-SOP-3: Idle equipment will be shut down when not in active use; visible emissions from stationary generators will be controlled.

AQ-SOP-5: There will be no open burning of construction trash.

AQ-SOP-7: Major operations will be avoided on days when the local Air Quality Index is expected to exceed 150.

11. **Noise**



Explanation:

There are no residences within the project location. Helicopter noise would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation:

During project activities, all standard safety protocols would be followed. Project activities would not impact human health or safety. Contractor shall be required to follow the OSHA standards set forth in 29 CFR 1910.269 specifically paragraphs (a)(2), (b), (c), (g), (k), (p), and (r) as required under (a)(E)(2). Contractor shall also adhere to the requirements under Title 8 Cal OSHA Electrical Safety Order specifically Subchapter 5 Article 38 and Subchapter 7 Article 12. Contractor shall maintain a safe working distance from conductors as described in the above OSHA standards. If a safe working distance cannot be maintained, a clearance shall be requested 3 days in advance.

Evaluation of Other Integral Elements

The proposed project would also meet conditions that are integral elements of the categorical exclusion. The project would not:



Threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of DOE or Executive Orders.

Explanation, if necessary:



Require siting and construction or major expansion of waste storage, disposal, recovery, or treatment facilities (including incinerators) that are not otherwise categorically excluded.

Explanation, if necessary:



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.

Explanation, if necessary:



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.

Explanation, if necessary:



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.

Explanation, if necessary:

Landowner Notification, Involvement, or Coordination

Description: WAPA has notified and received permission from the landowner to use the landing zone site.

Based on the foregoing, this proposed project does not have the potential to cause significant impacts to any environmentally sensitive resource.

Signed: **Latisha M. Saare**

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