

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION



Western Area
Power Administration
Rocky Mountain Region

Proposed Action Title: Gore Pass-Muddy Pass 69-kV Transmission Line Decommissioning

Location: Grand and Jackson Counties, Colorado

Project Number: 2016-191

Expiration Date: December 31, 2027

A. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION:

Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), Rocky Mountain Region (RMR), proposes to decommission and remove the Gore Pass-Muddy Pass (GOT-MPS) 69-kV Transmission Line located in Grand and Jackson Counties, Colorado. The GOT-MPS line, built in 1951, is predominantly composed of wood H-frame structures. To decommission and remove the line, crews will first remove the conductor by cutting it at intervals and detaching it from the structures. The detached conductor will be pulled onto spools for transportation and disposal. Most structures will then be removed by cutting the wood poles off at the ground surface, loading the wood poles onto trailers, and hauling the wood poles out of the area; some wood poles will be flown out by helicopter. WAPA may leave select wood poles standing or may completely remove wood poles from the ground if required by specific landowners. If structures are completely removed, the structure holes will be refilled and compacted for safety purposes. Before the conductor and structures can be removed, some amount of access road or right-of-way (ROW) maintenance may be necessary to facilitate safe access for crews. Existing access roads and overland access will be used to reach the transmission line; no new road construction will occur. Vehicles and equipment used for the line removal may include bucket trucks, truck-mounted cranes, skid-steer loaders, utility trucks, pole trailers, equipment trailers, and helicopters. If access road or ROW maintenance is required, additional equipment including motor graders, bulldozers, excavators, dump trucks, and compactors may be necessary. Work will be confined to WAPA's ROWs on private lands, public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Forest Service (USFS), and Colorado State Trust Lands (STL). Once the GOT-MPS line has been completely removed, WAPA will work with landowners to abandon ROWs.

B. STIPULATIONS PERTAINING TO 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, 2027.** 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) **The Environmental Restrictions Area maps provided to WAPA's maintenance crews show the ROW areas and access roads approved for maintenance. The approved work areas include indicated ROW sections to a width of 100 feet (50 feet either side of centerline) and indicated access roads to the full width of the existing access road prism.** If clarification of maps is required, please contact RMR's Archaeologist at (970) 286-3523 or RMR's Natural Resource Specialist at (970) 593-8803.
- 4) **The following structures must be cut off at the ground surface; poles must be removed by helicopter; and vehicle activity must be limited to rubber-tired line crew utility vehicles or off-highway vehicles:** 0/7, 0/8, 0/9, 0/10, 1/4, 1/5, 1/6, 2/2, 2/3, 2/4, 2/5, 3/5, 14/9, 16/7, 16/8, 16/9, 17/1, 19/2, 19/6, and 19/7.
- 5) **A cultural resource monitor(s) is required during implementation of the project at Structures 3/8 and 16/7 to 17/1.** An RMR Archaeologist must be contacted at least 90 days prior to initiation of the project so an on-site cultural resource monitor can be retained to ensure avoidance of cultural resources and identification of inadvertent discoveries.
- 6) **The Environmental Restrictions Area maps provided to WAPA's maintenance crews include cultural resource boundaries.** No ground disturbance is allowed within these cultural resource boundaries. All access within these cultural resource boundaries must be limited to existing access roads. If ground disturbance within these cultural resource boundaries is necessary, an RMR Archeologist must be contacted at (970) 302-4753 or (970) 286-3523. No ground disturbance within these cultural resource boundaries is authorized until written notification to proceed is provided by an RMR Archaeologist.
- 7) **A biological resource monitor(s) is required during implementation of the project at Structures 0/7 to 0/10, 1/4 to 1/6, and 2/2 to 2/5.** An RMR Natural Resource Specialist must be contacted at least 30 days before work begins to arrange for a biological resource monitor to be present to assist maintenance crews with the avoidance of listed plants.
- 8) **The Environmental Restrictions Area maps provided to WAPA's maintenance crews indicate structures within greater sage-grouse habitat.** Work at these structures must be avoided between March 1 and July 15 to avoid disturbance to breeding and nesting greater sage-grouse on BLM, STL, and USFS lands. No restrictions exist for work between July 16 and February 28.
- 9) The BLM has requested WAPA's maintenance crews leave the southernmost wood pole standing at Structure 3/6 for future nest platform installation.
- 10) Only in-kind culvert replacement and crossing maintenance is authorized. If culverts or crossings must be enlarged, expanded, or placed in new locations, RMR's Environment Department must be contacted to determine whether additional environmental review is required.
- 11) If rip-rap or other fill must be placed within waters of the United States (within wetland boundaries or below the ordinary high-water mark of surface waters), RMR's Environment Department must be contacted to determine whether additional environmental review is required.



- 12) Any injured or orphaned birds and all observed active nests must be immediately reported to RMR Environment at (970) 593-8803 or (970) 342-6462. Any dead birds must be reported to RMR Environment 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.
- 13) If any cultural resources are inadvertently discovered during implementation of the project, work within 100 feet of the discovery area must halt immediately, and an RMR Archaeologist must be contacted immediately at (970) 302-4753 or (970) 286-3523. Work in the area of discovery must not resume until notification to proceed is provided by an RMR Archaeologist.
- 14) If any possible human remains are inadvertently discovered during implementation of the project, work within 100 feet of the discovery area must halt immediately, and an RMR Archaeologist must be notified immediately at (970) 302-4753 or (970) 286-3523 (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 an RMR Archaeologist.
- 15) Vehicles and equipment (trailers, trucks, UTVs, etc.) will not be moved between work areas without first taking reasonable measures to ensure they are free of soil, seeds, vegetation matter, or other debris that could contain noxious weed seeds.
- 16) Activities involving the use of fuel, oil, hydraulic fluid, or other petroleum products must comply with RMR's Spill Response Plan (SRP).

C. NUMBER AND TITLE OF THE CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION BEING APPLIED:

(See text in 10 CFR 1021, Subpart D.)

B4.10 Removal of electric transmission facilities

D. REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS 10 CFR 1021.410 (b): (See full text in regulation)

The proposed action fits within a class of actions that is listed in Appendix A or B of 10 CFR 1021.

To fit within the classes of actions listed in Appendix B, a proposal must be one that would not:

- (1) threaten a violation of applicable statutory, regulatory, or permit requirements for environment, safety, and health, or similar requirements of the Department of Energy (DOE) or Executive Orders;
- (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;
- (3) disturb hazardous substances; pollutants; contaminants; or Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA)-excluded petroleum and natural gas products that preexist in the environment such that there would be uncontrolled or unpermitted releases;
- (4) 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 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B; (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.

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

The proposal has not been improperly segmented, and 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 conveyed to me and in my possession (or attached) concerning the proposed action, as NEPA Compliance Officer (as authorized under DOE Order 451.1B), I have determined that 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.

James
Wood

Digitally signed by
James Wood
Date: 2022.07.25
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Signature and Date

James Wood, Regional Environmental Manager
Rocky Mountain Region
Western Area Power Administration

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