

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Western Area Power Administration
Department of Energy



Western Area
Power Administration

Proposed Action: Malin Round Mountain Tower 71-8 Spacer Replacement Landing Zone +

Project No.:

Project Manager: Ryan Yeager

Location: Shasta County, CA

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 the Captain Jack-Olinda (CPJ-ODA) line, located in northeast California. Part of this responsibility includes ensuring WAPA maintains reliable operation of the transmission system.

WAPA proposes replacement of spacers at Tower 71-8 on Malin Round Mountain No. 1 transmission line. To accomplish this task, WAPA intends to use helicopter landing zone approximately 500 feet west of the WAPA right-of-way (ROW) for landing and as a staging area. The land is in a clearing within the Shasta-Trinity National forest, on private land adjacent to Summit Lake Road.


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: Malin Round Mountain Tower 71-8 Spacer Replacement Landing Zone



Project Site Description

The proposed project area is in rural Shasta County, California, 20 miles north of the town of Round Mountain. The dominant habitat surrounding the project area consists of mixed conifer, secondary-growth, forest. The landing zone is a clearing along an access road. This location is about 500 feet west of the MLN-RDM line.

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 <u>Explanation:</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The landing zone is previously disturbed. WAPA conducted a survey of the landing zone location and a 300-ft buffer on June 4, 2019. No cultural resources were observed. 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 at the project sites, although sensitive plant species are in the general area. The landing zone site is sparsely vegetated. Construction vehicles and equipment would be required to be clean before entering the project location to prevent spread of invasive weeds.

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



Explanation:

Although the project lies within the range of federally-protected northern spotted owl, the forest surrounding the project area lacks the complexity of suitable habitat for the species. WAPA conducted a survey of the project area on October 27, 2022 and found no resources of concern. Work is proposed in Fall and Winter time frame outside the bird nesting season.

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



Explanation:

A single ephemeral drainage was noted during the surveys, but it is approximately 300' from the proposed landing zone. It was flagged for avoidance.

6. **Wetlands**
Explanation:



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

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**
Explanation:



Spill prevention measures, including secondary containment at the landing zone, will be used during operations. The project would not provide a pathway for groundwater contamination. In the event of a hazardous material/waste spill, Environment and the COR will be contacted, WAPA Dispatch notified, and the appropriate Federal, State, and local regulating authority notified depending on the type and size of the spill.

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



The land use would not change at the project sites. 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:



Air quality emissions would be from short-term helicopter use to and from individual towers and spans and exhaust from worker's vehicles along access roads. Air quality modeling emissions based on 1 day of work were within the emissions criteria for Shasta County AQMD. The contractor is expected to adopt WAPA's procedures during the project:

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-4: Dust –control measures will be implemented in road construction and maintenance, as needed. Trucks transporting loose material will be covered or maintain at least two feet of freeboard and will not create any visible dust emissions.

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

AQ-SOP-6: Grading activities will cease during periods of high winds (as determined by local air quality management districts).

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

AQ-SOP-8: Include dust-control measures such as water or chemical suppressants.

AQ-SOP-9: Re-seeding of ground surfaces that have been significantly disturbed to prevent wind dispersion of soil.

AQ-SOP-10: Regular watering of exposed soils and unpaved access roads during maintenance activities.

AQ-SOP-11: Use reasonably practicable methods and devices to control, prevent, and otherwise minimize atmospheric emissions or discharges of air contaminants.

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. Contractor shall also adhere to the requirements under Title 8 Cal OSHA Electrical Safety Order specifically Subchapter 5 and Subchapter 7. 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:

- 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 will work closely with the landowners to provide adequate notification of construction timing.

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

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