

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Western Area Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: WAPA Property Acquisition at PG&E Cottonwood Substation Section G

Project No.: WON 100524264

Project Manager: Jeff Miller and Wayne Icenhower

Location: Shasta County, California

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021):

B1.24 Property Transfers. This applies to transfer, lease, disposition, or acquisition of interests in personal property (including, but not limited to, equipment and materials) or real property (including, but not limited to, permanent structures and land), provided that under reasonably foreseeable uses (1) there would be no potential for release of substances at a level, or in a form, that could pose a threat to public health or the environment and (2) the covered actions would not have the potential to cause a significant change in impacts from before the transfer, lease, disposition, or acquisition of interests.

Description of the Proposed Action:

Western Area Power Administration, Sierra Nevada Region (WAPA) proposes to file a condemnation of land and Declaration of Taking to acquire a fee interest in 3.85 acres land and assets at the Cottonwood Substation Section G , located at 21280 Trefoil Lane, Cottonwood, California, and a 0.18 acres nonexclusive easement for an access road. This facility is an integral part of the power transmission systems of the Central Valley Project (CVP) and the Pacific Northwest-Pacific Southwest Intertie Project (Intertie). This action includes the right to install an electronic gate, fence, and other improvements to control access. The acquisition will unify operations, equipment ownership and maintenance, and reliability compliance responsibilities with WAPA resulting in significant cost savings and enhanced power system reliability for WAPA and its CVP and Intertie customers. Assets also acquired include multiple lattice steel structures and steel support structures, 230-kV switches for 3 line breaker positions, 230-kV bus selector switches, concrete foundations, ground grid, conduits and cable trench, and 230-kV Section G yard lights.

Actions taken by WAPA related to the land acquisition are primarily administrative. The authority granted the Secretary of Energy to acquire by condemnation any interest in property was delegated to the Under Secretary (for Infrastructure) by Department of Energy Delegation Order No. S1-DEL-S3-2022-2, dated June 13, 2022, and redelegated by the Under Secretary (for Infrastructure) to the Administrator, Western Area Power Administration, by Department of Energy Redelegation Order No. S3-DEL-WAPA1-2022, dated June 13, 2022. A Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment was completed in June 2023 to support the purchase limitations on CERCLA liability. The facility would operate within normal operating limits and consistently within environmental laws and regulations.

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.

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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: WAPA Property Acquisition at PG&E Cottonwood Substation Section G

Project Site Description

Cottonwood substation lies in a semi-rural area approximately 1 mile northeast of the town of Cottonwood, CA. It is adjacent to Trefoil Lane, which bounds it to the south. The substation has a graveled surface. Habitat surrounding the substation is grassland interspersed with shrubs and trees, including blue oak. Shrubs and trees are primarily found near depressions and swales that may provide a slightly wetter microhabitat. The Cottonwood Canal lies approximately 300' to the north of the substation. The subject property, Section G, is 3.85 acres, the eastern portion of PG&E's electrical substation, and contains circuit breakers and electrical equipment. The site is enclosed by a ten-foot security wall containing drainage outlets.



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

Explanation:



The proposed action involves administrative, strategic and financial activities related to WAPA's acquisition of Cottonwood Substation Section G and easement. The action would not result in ground disturbing activities or changes to existing structures and landscapes. Cultural resource surveys were conducted in 2007 and 2011 and no cultural resources were reported. For these reasons, there is no impact to historic and cultural resources.

2. **Geology and Soils**



Explanation:

The proposed action involves administrative, strategic and financial activities related to WAPA's property acquisition. The action would not result in ground disturbing activities or potential for erosion, landslides, or other related impacts. A Phase 1 site assessment was performed and no soil contamination was detected. Drainage stream is north to catch run-off from the canal and a concrete culvert is south of the site.

For these reasons, there is no impact to geology and soils.

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



Explanation:

The proposed action involves administrative, strategic and financial activities related to WAPA's property acquisition. The action would not result in vegetation removal or alteration. For these reasons, there is no impact to plants.

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



Explanation:

The proposed action involves administrative, strategic and financial activities related to WAPA's property acquisition. The action would not cause impacts to special-status species and habitats. Based on WAPA's biological surveys, no special status species were reported within the property boundaries. For these reasons, there is no impact to wildlife.

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



Explanation:

The proposed action involves administrative, strategic and financial activities related to WAPA's property acquisition. The action would not result in potential to cause impacts to water bodies, floodplains, and fish. Surface water drainage is generally towards the south. The Cottonwood canal is north of the site with a drainage stream north of the substation to catch run-off from the canal. A concrete culvert is located south of the site.

6. **Wetlands**
Explanation:



The proposed action involves administrative, strategic and financial activities related to WAPA's property acquisition. The action would not result in ground disturbing activities or impacts to wetlands. No impacts would occur.

7. **Groundwater and Aquifers**
Explanation:



The proposed action involves administrative, strategic and financial activities related to WAPA's property acquisition. Groundwater generally flows to the south. The Phase 1 Site Assessment reported that a 4,300 gallons PCB-containing mineral oil release occurred in 2003 from the substation (west of Section G property) and was contained within a retention pond; oil was removed and soil excavated. Groundwater sampling confirmed there was no groundwater contamination detected. A No Further Action (NFA) was issued by Central Valley Water Board in 2017. Gasoline was released at the substation in 1992 and a NFA letter issued in 1992.

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



The proposed action involves administrative, strategic and financial activities related to WAPA's property acquisition and there would be no change in land use. No impacts would occur.

9. **Visual Quality**
Explanation:



The proposed action involves administrative, strategic and financial activities related to WAPA's property acquisition. Site use would remain as a substation with transmission lines and would not result in new impacts to visual resources.

10. **Air Quality**
Explanation:



The proposed action involves administrative, strategic and financial activities related to WAPA's property acquisition. Site use would remain as a substation and subject to air quality regulations. No impacts would occur.

11. **Noise**



Explanation:

The proposed action involves administrative, strategic and financial activities related to WAPA's property acquisition. Site use would remain a substation and would not result in noise impacts.

12. **Human Health and Safety**



Explanation:

The proposed action involves administrative, strategic and financial activities related to WAPA's property acquisition. Site use would remain as a substation. The Phase 1 assessment reported that two former releases occurred from the substation - 4,300 gallons of mineral oil in 2003 and gasoline in 1992; both actions resulted in No Further Action letters issued by Central Valley Water Board. These releases were considered Historical Recognized Environmental Conditions. There was no evidence of Recognized or Controlled Recognized Environmental Conditions and no further investigation was recommended. No impacts would occur.

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: Proposed action is under property transfer contracts with directly affected agencies.

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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