

# Categorical Exclusion Determination

Western Area Power Administration  
Department of Energy



**Proposed Action:** ODA-TCY 6 LZs near 168-2, 171-2, 172-1, 177-1, 179-2, 183-2

**Project No.:** 100153025

**Project Manager:** James Hill

**Location:** Sacramento and Contra Costa counties

**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 spacers on spans along the ODA-TCY transmission line. To accomplish this task, six landing zones (LZ) outside the right-of-way near Towers 168/2, 171/2, 172/1, 177/1, 179/2, and 183-2 will be used in locations within Sacramento and Contra Costa counties. Equipment will be staged at the landing zones.

**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:** ODA-TCY 6 LZs near 168-2, 171-2, 172-1, 177-1, 179-2, 183-2

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## Project Site Description

Proposed helicopter landing zones are in Sacramento and Contra Costa counties, California. The landing zones near Towers 168-2 and 171-2 are located on State of California land in Sacramento county. The site near 168-2 is adjacent to W. Sherman Island Road along the Sacramento River on undeveloped agricultural land within a disturbed area. The site near Tower 171-2 is near Sherman Island East Levee Road along the San Joaquin River, on a disturbed access road near undeveloped agricultural land. Both these areas have been used as helicopter landing zones previously. The site near tower 177-1 is on private property adjacent to Bethel Island Road on disturbed undeveloped land in Contra Costa County. The site near Tower 179-2 is off Eagle Lane on private property on disturbed land near farm buildings and farm equipment staging area in Contra Costa County. The site near Tower 183-2 is located on East Bay Municipal Utility property on disturbed undeveloped land adjacent to a marina on Old River in the Delta. The site near Tower 172-1 is located on private property in a disturbed area used as an equipment yard.

## Evaluation of Potential Impacts to Environmental Resources

<b>Environmental Resource Impacts</b>	<b>No Potential for Significance</b>	<b>No Potential for Significance, with Conditions</b>
<b>1. Historic and Cultural Resources</b> <b><u>Explanation:</u></b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No cultural resource concerns were identified in any of the landing zone sites. The right-of-ways were surveyed and no nearby sites were identified. These activities are covered under WAPA's Programmatic Agreement with State Historic Preservation Office for the Operations and Maintenance of our right-of-ways.		
No ground disturbance is required. Natural Resources will be contacted immediately if archeological, paleontological, or historic evidence is found. <span style="float: right;">+</span>		

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 landing zones. Sites are generally clear of vegetation or contain ruderal species.

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

**Explanation:**

Sites were either surveyed or desktop reviewed for resource concerns. No special-status species are known or expected to be present at landing zone sites. The project will occur outside of the nesting season and will not have an effect on migratory birds.

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

**Explanation:**

The project areas are all terrestrial sites. Although many of these landing zones are within floodplains, they are separated by levees from rivers. Additionally, secondary containment is used at staging areas/refueling zones.

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.

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 sites.

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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