

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION



Western Area
Power Administration
Rocky Mountain Region

Proposed Action Title: Ault Stage 09 (Land Acquisition, Interconnection Facility, Substation Yard Expansion, and Structure Replacements)

Location: Weld County, Colorado

Project Number: 2022-026

Expiration Date: December 31, 2027

A. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION:

Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), Rocky Mountain Region (RMR), proposes to construct a substation expansion, and new control building for the Public Service Company of Colorado (PSCo) interconnection to WAPA's Ault Substation. PSCo proposes to construct 6.5 miles of new double circuit 230-kV transmission line from WAPA's Ault (AU) Substation east to the newly proposed PSCo Husky Substation near the town of Ault, CO. To support PSCo's interconnect, WAPA proposes to purchase land to expand the AU Substation to the south and increase capabilities with a new 230-kV breaker-and-a-half bay. WAPA will clear, level, and construct the extension of the AU Substation which will also include perimeter fencing around the expansion. The new equipment added to the AU Substation will include two power circuit breakers (SF6), four disconnect switches, one take-off structure, three metering current and potential transformers, batteries, and a new control building. To facilitate the installation of this equipment, new concrete foundations, precast concrete cable trench, and anchor bolts will need to be installed, as well as the associated bus system, grounding system, conduit system, insulated conductors and cables, terminal boxes, control panels, lighting units, and new access roads. The transmission line construction will take place on newly-acquired PSCo easements across private land and on WAPA's property associated with the AU Substation. WAPA will raise the height of the double-circuit Structure 42/4 on the Ault-Weld East (AU-WLD-E) and Ault-Weld West (AU-WLD-W) 230-kV Transmission Lines to accommodate for the undercrossing of the new PSCo transmission line. New and existing access roads and overland routes will be used for construction and permanent access to the new PSCo line and the expanded AU Substation. After the new equipment and associated systems have been installed, the AU Substation and associated construction areas will be regraded and graveled as necessary, and the private property construction area will be restored to the landowners' satisfaction. This project will be confined to private and WAPA-owned lands and rights-of-way (ROWS) in Weld County, Colorado.

This Categorical Exclusion (CX) replaces the original CX issued April 7, 2022, with an original expiration date of December 31, 2027. The Proposed Action (Section A) has been updated for this CX; the Stipulations (Section B) remain the same.

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) 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.
- 4) If any cultural resources are inadvertently discovered during implementation of the proposed action, 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.
- 5) If any possible human remains are inadvertently discovered during implementation of the proposed action, 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.
- 6) Installation of equipment in substations must conform to WAPA's requirements and must be approved by WAPA. Oil-filled equipment, including bushings, must not contain polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB). In addition, oil-filled equipment must be permanently labeled by the manufacturer as No-PCB. Certification must be provided to RMR's Environment Department at or before the time of installation. Oil-filled equipment may require an oil spill containment system to comply with federal or state regulations.
- 7) 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.
- 8) 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.)

B1.3 Routine maintenance

B4.11 Electric power substations and interconnection facilities

B4.12 Construction of powerlines

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: 2023.11.20
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Signature and Date

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

Prepared by:
Mark Suchy, Natural Resource Specialist
William Ankele, Archaeologist

