

# CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION DETERMINATION



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**Proposed Action Title: Lovell-North Cody 69-kV Transmission Line Optical Ground Wire Installation**

**Location: Big Horn and Park Counties, Wyoming**

**Project Number: 2022-049**

**Expiration Date: December 31, 2029**

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## **A. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION:**

Western Area Power Administration (WAPA), Rocky Mountain Region (RMR), proposes to install optical ground wire (OPGW) on its existing Lovell-North Cody (LV-NC) 69-kV Transmission Line in Big Horn and Park counties, Wyoming. The purpose of this project is to update and improve WAPA's communication system. The OPGW will be installed between Lovell Substation and North Cody Substation. The OPGW will replace the existing overhead ground wire (OGW) on the LV-NC Transmission Line. The OPGW will not be visibly different from the existing OGW. The existing OGW will be used to pull the new OPGW into place, with pulling sites positioned at regular intervals to pull, wind, and remove the OGW, and feed, tighten, and secure the new OPGW. The individual lengths of OPGW will be spliced together at regular intervals along the spans, and permanent splice enclosures will be installed on transmission structures at these locations, 4/4, 9/5, 14/2, 23/4, 23/8, 28/5, 35/7, 40/7, and 44/4. Equipment used for this project may include helicopters, bucket trucks, wire pullers and tensioners, cranes, splicing trailers, cable reel trailers, and utility trucks. Landing zones (LZ's) will be used to provide a safe work zone for the helicopter. The LZ's will be located outside of WAPA's permanent ROW but within acquired temporary easements. Work will be confined to WAPA's ROW and temporary easements on private lands, state lands, and public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the Bureau of Reclamation. The ROW will be accessed by existing access routes; no access road maintenance or new road construction is authorized.

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## **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, 2029.** 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 and/or Contractor(s) include cultural resource boundaries.** No ground disturbance is allowed outside of previously disturbed areas. All access within these cultural resource boundaries must be limited to existing access roads. If vehicular access within these cultural

resource boundaries is necessary outside of existing access roads, an RMR Archeologist must be contacted at (970) 658-6794 or (970) 218-4946.

- 4) 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 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.
- 5) 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, (970) 286-3523, or (970) 658-6794. Work in the area of discovery must not resume until notification to proceed is provided by an RMR Archaeologist.
- 6) 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, (970) 286-3523, or (970) 658-6794 (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.
- 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).

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

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

B4.7. Fiber optic cable

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**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.

Digitally signed by James  
Wood  
Date: 2024.02.03  
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Signature and Date

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

Prepared by:  
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