

Categorical Exclusion Determination

Western Area Power Administration
Department of Energy



Proposed Action: City of Oakley Laurel Road Pole Relocation

Project No.: 100557430

Project Manager: Steve Tuggle

Location: Laurel Road, Oakley, California

Categorical Exclusion Applied (from Subpart D, 10 C.F.R. Part 1021): B4.6 and B4.13

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 Tracy-Contra Costa 69-kV line (TRY-CC4), located in Oakley California, Contra Costa County, California. 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.

Categorical exclusion B4.6 covers additions and modifications to transmission facilities and B4.13 covers upgrading and rebuilding existing powerlines.

The City of Oakley has requested that WAPA relocate and install two wood poles for towers 18-7 and 18-8 and remove pole 18-6, currently adjacent to the southern edge of Laurel Road, to accommodate the widening of Laurel Road. The new location for poles 18-7 and 18-8 will be 40 feet south of Laurel Road and within the current path of the Tracy-Contra Costa 69-kV transmission line. Currently the transmission line right of way (ROW) is within a vineyard on private property. The City of Oakley will purchase the land and WAPA will acquire a new easement agreement to extend their ROW.

Ground disturbance will be approximately 1 acre, 15 feet depth. Drilling will be conducted for direct burial of 2 poles. Equipment will include drilling equipment, crane, bucket truck, and backhoe. Diesel fueled equipment will be included.

Prior to the start of project activities, all personnel will participate in environmental awareness training which will inform them of the sensitive habitats within the project area, the species that have the potential to occur in the project area, and the avoidance and minimization measures that are to be adhered to during project activities. Any new crew members that start after project activities have started will be given the environmental awareness training prior to starting work on site.

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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DALLDORF

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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.

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Project Site Description

The proposed project area is in Contra Costa County, California.

The dominant habitat at this site is working vineyard south of Laurel Road.

Equipment staging areas would be within the ROW whenever possible.

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	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Explanation:

The current ROW has been surveyed for cultural resources and no cultural resources were identified. The land use has been agriculture and working vineyard. Installation of poles is accomplished by straight augering. This action is covered under 36 CFR Part 800 - Protection of Historic Properties: No potential to cause effects. WAPA's environment department will be contacted immediately if archaeological, paleontological, or historic evidence is found.

2. **Geology and Soils**



Explanation:

Ground disturbance is limited to approximately 1 acre within the previously disturbed localized areas around transmission poles and would not constitute a major impact to surrounding geology or soils.

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



Explanation:

The project will occur in a an area used as a working vineyard. No special-status plants are known or expected in the project area. 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:

The project will occur in land used as a working vineyard and limited habitat value for special status species. No special status wildlife is known or expected in the project area.

For the protection of migratory birds, if planned activities occur between March 1 and August 15, nesting bird surveys will be required prior to project activities. If a nest is detected, an appropriate buffer will be marked in which all O&M activities and herbicide applications will be prohibited from March 1 to August 15 or until nestlings have fledged. A standard nest buffer of 50 feet (250 feet for raptors) will be used, unless otherwise indicated by the surveying biologist. Nesting surveys can be conducted up to 3 weeks prior to project activities.

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



Explanation:

No water bodies or fish habitat are present in the project area. No significant changes to floodplains will occur as part of the pole relocation.

6. **Wetlands**
Explanation:



Wetlands and jurisdictional waters are neither located in the project area nor have potential to be affected by the project.

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:



Existing poles and transmission line are located within existing right-of-way (ROW) adjacent to Laurel Road. The new poles will be located approximately 40 feet south within the new ROW boundary. The land use within the ROW would change from a working vineyard to native soil, once the vineyard is removed. The site is not 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 construction; however, there would be no significant changes to air quality during or after construction. Contra Costa is out of attainment with Federal NAAQS standards for 8-hour Ozone (2008, Marginal), 8-hour Ozone (2015, Marginal), and PM 2.5 (24 hour, Moderate). Project construction emissions in lb/day were below the Bay Area Air Quality Management District thresholds of significance at 47.11 O₃(NO_x), 2.4 O₃ (ROG), 8.96 PM_{2.5}, and 79.37 PM₁₀, compared to 54 NO_x, 54 ROG, 54 PM_{2.5}, and 82 PM₁₀. Estimated project emissions are well below the De Minimis thresholds, and therefore General Conformity is determined not to apply to this project. Estimated project emissions are 3.24 tons per year (tpy) Ozone and 0.81 tpy PM_{2.5}, below 100 tpy De Minimis thresholds. Construction crews will implement the standard operating procedures agreed to in the San Joaquin Valley ROW Maintenance EA, which are as follows:

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.



11. **Noise**



Explanation:

Residences are located north and east of the project site. A local ball field and park is located north of the project site across Laurel Road. Construction noise for installing new transmission poles would be temporary and would occur during daylight hours. Operational noise would not change.

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. All materials generated from the project that can be recycled, will be recycled. Disposed or recycled waste material will be in accordance with applicable Federal, State, and local regulations and ordinances. In the event of a Hazardous Material/Waste spill, Environmental Department will be contacted, dispatch notified, and the appropriate Federal, State, and local regulating authority notified depending on the type and size of the spill. In the right of way, spill drip pans (or similar) will be placed below fueling areas, and spill kit and tools will be available nearby to stop the flow of fuel spills. Employees are trained in spill response.

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 would work closely with the landowner, City of Oakley, and Caltrans 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.

Signed: KRISTEN DALLDORF Digitally signed by KRISTEN DALLDORF Date: 2024.06.21 11:53:41 -0700

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