



U.S. Department of Energy

Categorical Exclusion Determination Form

Submit by E-mail

Proposed Action Title: Oahe to Glenham 230kV Line Upgrade

Program or Field Office: SDMO

Location(s) (City/County/State): Potter, Sully, and Walworth Counties, South Dakota

Proposed Action Description:

WAPA is proposing to raise some of its structures along our Oahe to Glenham transmission line. Due to increased electrical loads causing line droop, the transmission lines need to be raised to maintain necessary ground clearance. The project includes replacing steel structures, re-conductor spans, and raising spans. The project will utilize existing access roads. There are three phases of the project.

- WAPA determined that the proposed project would not cause significant changes to risks to bio/natural resources, and would therefore reach a no effect determination. Listed threatened and endangered species in the vicinity of the project include Northern Long-Eared Bat, Piping Plover, Red Knot, Whooping Crane, and Pallid Sturgeon. WAPA received concurrence from the FWS SD ECOS on May 1, 2023, for potential monitoring and mitigation, if necessary. See Appendix A for more information, including requirements for coordinating with a WAPA Biologist.
- WAPA's RPO surveyed the proposed project area and identified two archaeological sites that are present in the project area and historic properties that may be affected by the proposed action. A minor structure move/relocation (structure 14/8) and monitoring (structures 14/8 and 43/2) have been proposed. See Appendix A for more details. If, during the course of any ground disturbance related to the project, any bones, artifacts, foundations, or other indications of past human occupation of the area are uncovered, the project will be stopped, and the SHPO will be immediately notified.
- Desktop qualitative review of impacts to transportation, air quality, hazardous materials, human health and safety, socioeconomic & community resources. Project is not located in or near formally classified lands, areas of high scenic beauty, scenic overlooks, scenic highways, wilderness areas, etc., and will have limited aesthetic impact. No concerns identified.

Categorical Exclusion(s) Applied:

B4.6 - Additions and modifications to transmission facilities

B4.13 - Upgrading and rebuilding existing powerlines

For the complete DOE National Environmental Policy Act regulations regarding categorical exclusions, including the full text of each categorical exclusion, see Subpart D of [10 CFR Part 1021](#).

Regulatory Requirements in 10 CFR 1021.410(b): (See full text in regulation)

The proposal fits within a class of actions that is listed in Appendix A or B to 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D.

To fit within the classes of actions listed in 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, 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 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 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 Part 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 listed in paragraph B(5) of 10 CFR Part 1021, Subpart D, Appendix B.

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 segmented to meet the definition of a categorical exclusion. This proposal is not connected to other actions with potentially significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.25(a)(1)), is not related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts (40 CFR 1508.27(b)(7)), and is not precluded by 40 CFR 1506.1 or 10 CFR 1021.211 concerning limitations on actions during preparation of an environmental impact statement.

Based on my review of 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.

NEPA Compliance Officer: **JOHN RUSSELL** Digitally signed by JOHN RUSSELL
Date: 2024.06.14 13:56:31 -06'00'

Date Determined: 6/14/2024

Oahe to Glenham: Structure Raises South Dakota

*Categorical Exclusion
Appendix A*



**Western Area
Power Administration**

June 11, 2024

Prepared By: Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) Upper Great Plains Region (UGPR) NEPA Coordinator – Spenser Kuhn

Preparation Date: June 11, 2024

Project Name: Oahe to Glenham: Structure Raises project (OA-GH 230kV Line)

Project Location: Hughes, Sully, Potter, and Walworth Counties, South Dakota (SD)

Project Details

Oahe - Sully Buttes - Whitlock - Glenham 230kV Line Upgrade can be split into three parts:

1. Re-conductor the first three spans outside of Oahe towards Sully Buttes (T.OA.SB. to 00/3).
2. Sully Buttes - Whitlock: Raise spans (22/4-22/5 & 33/5-34/1), which will most likely require replacing 2-4 steel structures.
3. Whitlock - Glenham: Raise spans (43/1-43/2, 45/2-45/3, 47/1-47/2, 48/4-48/5, 95/5-50/1, 53/4-53/5, 55/1-55/2, 55/5-56/1, 59/4-59/5, 60/2-60/3, 66/1-66/2), which will most likely require replacing 11-22 steel structures.

Construction Timing

The construction timing may affect the primary nesting season (PNS) for species listed under the Migratory Birds Treaty Act (MBTA) and/or Endangered Species Act (ESA). If construction is to occur during these periods, coordinate with a WAPA biologist to conduct appropriate bird surveys for any periods listed in Table 1 during which construction or vegetative removal must occur.

Table 1. SD MBTA and ESA Species PNS and Migration Periods.

Species	Period Start	Period End	Notes
All MBTA PNS	May 1	August 1	Coordinate with WAPA Biologist 2+ weeks in advance if construction or vegetation removal is to occur during this period, or during any periods listed within this table.
Whooping Crane Migration	April 1 (spring) October 1 (fall)	May 15 (spring) October 31 (fall)	If whooping cranes are observed within ½-mile of project footprint, stop construction immediately and consult with WAPA Biologist. Construction can resume when cranes have moved at least ½-mile away from project footprint.



Table 1. SD MBTA and ESA Species PNS and Migration Periods (Continued).

Piping Plover Migration	April 15	August 30	Work on structures within ¼-mile of wetland or water body requires coordination with WAPA Biologist and bird surveys at least three times per week.
Red Knot Migration	May 1 (spring) August 15 (fall)	May 31 (spring) September 30 (fall)	Stop construction if red knots are observed within project footprint and consult with WAPA Biologist.
Bald Eagles PNS	January 15	August 30	Avoid all activities within 660 feet of active nests.
Golden Eagles PNS	January 15	August 30	Avoid all activities within one mile of active nests.

Biology

Listed threatened and endangered species in the vicinity of the project include Northern Long-Eared Bat, Piping Plover, Red Knot, Whooping Crane, and Pallid Sturgeon. WAPA has received concurrence from the USFWS SD ECOS on May 1, 2023, for potential monitoring and mitigation, if necessary.

- The primary nesting season for MBTA species in SD is May 1 to August 1. If vegetation removal or construction initiation must take place during the primary nesting season, a WAPA biologist will conduct a bird survey within 2 weeks of the start of removal/construction to determine nesting bird locations within the project footprint, and suitable buffer distances will be established to avoid disturbance of MBTA species.
- Whooping crane migration windows in South Dakota include April 1 – May 15 in the spring and the month of October in the fall. During these migration windows, if whooping cranes are observed within ½ mile of the project footprint, project activities would cease immediately and would not resume until the whooping cranes were allowed to move off naturally to a distance beyond ½ mile.
 - USFWS and SDGFP would be notified within 24 hours of any whooping crane observations within ½ mile of the project site.
 - The project will not impact wetlands, therefore impacts to overall whooping crane habitat would be discountable and insignificant. WAPA has determined the project may affect but is not likely to adversely affect the whooping crane.
- A portion of the project would take place within ¼-mile of critical piping plover habitat, the Missouri River. If construction would take place April 15 – August 30, and if the structures being worked on are within ¼ mile of a wetland or water body that may serve as potentially suitable habitat, a WAPA biologist will conduct piping plover surveys at least three times per week to assess the presence/absence of piping plovers within ¼ mile of the structures being worked on.



- If a piping plover nest, nesting behavior, and/or chicks are observed within ¼ mile of the project, project activities would delay until USFWS and SDGFP have been consulted for further instruction.
- Given the project will not impact piping plover habitat, impacts would be discountable and insignificant. WAPA has determined the project may affect but is not likely to adversely affect the piping plover.
- Red knot migration through South Dakota is expected during May in spring and August 15 – September 30 in fall. If red knots are observed at any point within the project footprint, project activities would cease immediately and delay until USFWS had been consulted to determine when construction activities could resume.
 - The project will not impact wetlands, therefore impacts to overall red knot habitat would be discountable and insignificant. WAPA has determined the project may affect but is not likely to adversely affect the red knot.
- WAPA will avoid all activities less than 660 feet from active bald eagle nests, and less than one mile from active golden eagle nests. Construction activities within these buffers will be limited to portions of the year when eggs, juveniles, and/or breeding adults are not present on the nest (traditionally September 1 – January 14).
 - Given WAPA's commitment to uphold these conservation measures, the project's impacts to eagles would be discountable and insignificant.
- Since work on the project will not impact the Missouri River or its tributaries, the project will have no effect on pallid sturgeon or their habitats.

Cultural Resources

WAPA's RPO surveyed the proposed project area and identified two archaeological sites that are present in the project area, and historic properties may be affected by the proposed action. A structure move/relocation and monitoring have been proposed. If, during any ground disturbance related to the project, any bones, artifacts, foundations, or other indications of past human occupation of the area are uncovered, the project will be stopped, and the SHPO will be immediately notified.

- Structure 14/8 is to be moved an additional 50 feet to the south (for a total move of 160 feet south). This would place the new structure at the south edge of the ridge and outside of Site 39SL0494. The relocated structure would be approximately 57 feet away from the nearest feature (Cairn #1). In addition, an archaeologist will be present on site for monitoring prior to the initiation of any construction work and to verify that the identified features are marked with at least a 25-foot buffer.
- Structure 43/2 is directly adjacent to Site 39PO0105 consists of a lone cairn situated on top of a long, narrow figure ridge. To avoid impacts to the cairn during removal of this existing structure, a WAPA archaeologist will clearly mark the feature's boundary and must be present onsite before access to the work areas is allowed and during any construction activity. All personnel, equipment, and vehicles shall always remain outside of the designated boundary.



Other NEPA Review

- No USFWS National Wildlife Refuge Lands, Fish Hatcheries, or Critical Habitat is present in the project area.
- Prime farmland if irrigated and Farmland of statewide importance exist within the project area according to the USDS NRCS Web Soil Survey.
 - However, any prime farmland is not expected to be impacted because the project is in previously disturbed land and.
- The project is not located in or near formally classified lands, areas of high scenic beauty, scenic overlooks, scenic highways, or wilderness areas.
- None of the structures being raised are in wetlands, and the project will not impact natural hydrology of the sites, therefore the project will have no effect on wetlands or waterbodies.
- Desktop qualitative review of impacts to transportation, air quality, hazardous materials, human health and safety, socioeconomic, and community resources. No concerns were identified.

