

Categorical Exclusion (CX) Determination

Proposed Action: Interconnection of the Pronghorn Gas Plant 115 kV transmission line.

Description of Proposed Action: Western received an interconnection request from Upper Missouri G & T Electric Cooperative Inc's (Upper Missouri) member Roughrider Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Roughrider) to interconnect at Western's Belfield Substation in November of 2010. The request for interconnection is for a line bay addition to the existing 230-kilovolt (kV) ring bus at Western's Belfield substation; as well as the installation of a revenue meter at a proposed new substation, South Heart substation, owned and operated by Upper Missouri. In order to bring the power into Western's substation, Upper Missouri and Roughrider must interconnect their Pronghorn substation, located in SEC17 T140N R99W, to the proposed South Heart substation, located in SEC20 T140N R98W, and then the South Heart substation to Western's Belfield substation, located in SEC20 T140N R98W. This would be accomplished by building a roughly eight mile stretch of 115-kV transmission line east-west between Pronghorn and South Heart, and a north-south tie-line of less than one half mile of 230-kV between South Heart and Belfield.

Number and Title of Categorical Exclusions Being Applied: 10 CFR 1021.410 Subpart D, Appendix B, B4.11: Construction of electric power substations... or modification of existing substations and support facilities.

Regulatory Requirements for CX Determination: The DOE Guidelines for Compliance with the Regulatory Requirements for the National Environmental Policy Act at 10 CFR 1021.410(b), require the following determinations be made in order for a proposed action to be categorically excluded from National Environmentally Policy Act (NEPA) review:

- 1) The proposed action fits within a class of actions listed in Appendix B to Subpart D.
- 2) There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposal that may affect the significance of the environmental effects of the proposal; and
- 3) 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.

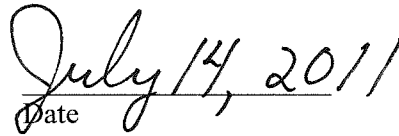
Results of Review: In accordance with DOE environmental regulations (10 CFR 1021) Western has reviewed the proposed action in terms of the level of NEPA review needed. Based on this review, Western has determined the proposal is encompassed within a class of action listed in Appendix B to Subpart D (10 CFR 1021.410) which lists actions not normally requiring the preparation of either an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or an Environmental Assessment (EA), provided the actions meet the integral elements defined in Appendix B. The proposed action fits into the categorical exclusion listed under B4.11 "Construction of electric power substations... or modification of existing substations and support facilities...". The North Dakota State Historic Preservation Office concurred with Western's finding of "No historic properties affected" on 1 July 2011. A site biological survey was performed by Western biologists on 3 May 2011. Western's biological assessment (BA) concluded that the project would have no effect on the black-footed ferret, gray wolf, Sprague's pipit, and the whooping crane. The "no effect" determination for the Sprague's pipit and the whooping crane were made because of the agreement by the applicant to mark the static wires of the new transmission lines for the entire

length of the project with bird diverters of the best available technology. A courtesy copy of the "no effects" findings and the BA were sent to the ND USFWS ecological services office on June 27, 2011.

Determination: Based on my review of information provided to me concerning the proposed action as NEPA Compliance Officer, I have determined that the proposed action fits within the specified class of action, the other regulatory requirements set forth above are met, and the proposed action is categorically excluded from further requirements of NEPA review.



Nicholas J. Stas
NEPA Compliance Officer, UGP



Date