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# FEMA

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**  
**HAVENS TO POLK TRANSMISSION LINE**  
**POLK AND MERRICK COUNTIES, NEBRASKA**  
**FEMA-1770-DR-NE**

In administering the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP), the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) has developed a project in conjunction with the Polk County Rural Public Power District to construct 9.8 miles of a new 69-kV transmission line with 3 miles of under-built 12.47-kV distribution line along a direct route between Haven Substation and Polk Substation in Polk County, NE, for the creation of a new transmission line. The new transmission line will tie together two existing, radial-fed substations to create a loop-fed substation arrangement for mitigation against all weather-related events. The new transmission line will consist of wood poles, typically 55 to 80 feet in height, with an average span length of 250-275 feet. The structures to be used are similar to Rural Utility Service (RUS) standard TP69 style with distribution under-built.

The line will consist of one static conductor at the top of the pole for lightning protection, and three-phase conductors below the static conductor using either suspension insulators or a horizontal post insulator. The 69-kV line phase conductors used will be Twisted Pair ACSR (Aluminum Conductor Steel Reinforced) conductors. The proposed size of the phase conductor will be a T2 4/0 ACSR. The new transmission line will decrease the likelihood of electric service interruptions to the community and substation service areas when adverse weather condition damage one of the existing radial-fed transmission lines.

The 3 miles of 12.47-kV under-built distribution line will be installed using cross arms mounted under the lowest phase of the transmission conductor. The conductor used for distribution will be a T2 1/0 ACSR.

The new line will reduce outages and strengthen the sub-transmission grid, reduce outages, and ensure health services and water treatment centers will be allowed to continue critical services during adverse events.

For the project to improve system reliability, one of the radial transmission lines must remain in-service during these events, and no damage can be sustained to the new line.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 requires that FEMA evaluate the potential environmental effects of the agency's proposed and alternative actions prior to

obligating HMGP funds. The President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) has developed a series of regulations for implementing the NEPA. These regulations are included in Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Parts 1500–1508. The CFR requires that a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) be prepared, including a discussion of the potential environmental effects of the proposed Federal Action. In accordance with both CEQ and FEMA regulations implementing NEPA in 44 CFR Part 10, Polk County Rural Public Power District prepared a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) to identify and evaluate potential environmental impacts and presented in the EA and to determine whether the potential effects of the Proposed Action will require preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The Draft EA was made available for public review and comment from June 18 to July 18, 2012. FEMA received no substantive comments during the comment period on the draft EA.

## **FINDING**

Based upon the project scope of work, site design, and EA; and in accordance with FEMA's regulations in 44 CFR Part 10 for environmental consideration, including Executive Orders (EO) addressing floodplains (EO 11988), wetlands (EO 11990), and environmental justice (EO 12898), FEMA determined the Proposed Action will not significantly affect the quality of the natural and human environment and does not have the potential for significant cumulative effects when combined with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions in accordance with 44 CFR Part 10.8 (d)(3)(x). The following mitigation measures are required as project conditions;

- Floodplain and/or Wetland areas will be avoided, power poles will be placed outside these areas, and power lines will span existing floodplains and/or wetlands. No staging of equipment or construction activity will take place within these sensitive areas. The majority of work in these areas should be above the high bank line.
- Yellow Spiral Bird Flight Diverters are required on sections of transmission line crossing the Platte River from coordinate 41.243708, -97.733333 to coordinate 41.254489, -97.752044. Bird Flight Diverters will be placed at intervals not to exceed 30 feet.
- To avoid potential impacts to the Platte River caddisfly, placement of power poles will be outside of wetland habitats along the Platte River crossing and side channel area and construction equipment will not enter any wet, low-lying areas.
- The subgrantee is required to determine whether Bald or Golden eagles are within 0.5-mile of an active nest or within line-of-sight of an active nest. Bald and Golden eagles frequent river systems during winter where open water and forested corridors provide feeding, perching, and roosting habitats. The bald eagle southward migration begins as early as October and the wintering period extends from December through March.
- The subgrantee is required to avoid removal or impacts to vegetation during primary nesting season of breeding birds. Most migratory bird nesting activity in Nebraska occurs during the period April 1 through July 15, although raptors nest in woodland

habitats from February 1 through July 15 and sedge wrens nest in wetland habitats from July 15 through September 10.

- The Platte River crossing should happen during low flow periods (typically August through October).
- Implement erosion and sediment control for the duration of the project. These should be monitored daily to ensure effectiveness, with particular attention after storm events.
- Exposed stream banks (if any) must be stabilized immediately after construction activity and eroded surfaces will not be left exposed for over one day.
- Develop and implement a hazardous materials safety protocol to include that temporary storage facilities for petroleum products be located and protected to prevent accidental spills.

As a result of the information and analysis contained in the Environmental Assessment, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been prepared. An Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

#### APPROVAL



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8/01/2012

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Date