



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Coconino
National Forest,
Supervisor's Office

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File Code: 1950

Date: June 2, 2004

Dear Interested Party:

Your input is being sought on the proposed **Blue Ridge 69kV Transmission Line Project** on the Mogollon Rim Ranger District of the Coconino National Forest. This letter and the enclosed document will provide you with information on the Purpose and Need and the Proposed Action for the project.

The Project

The *'Environmental Planning Group'* (EPG) of Phoenix, Arizona, a third party contractor, has been approved by the Forest Service to prepare an environmental assessment to analyze the impacts of constructing a 69kV transmission line from Winslow, Arizona to the Blue Ridge area under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The transmission line will be constructed across multiple land ownerships. They include, City of Winslow, lands leased to Hopi Tribe, State Trust, private and Federal lands. Please refer to the enclosed newsletter that displays the exact location of the proposed transmission line.

APS is the electric power supplier to the communities of Blue Ridge, Winslow, and Payson located in Coconino and Navajo counties, Arizona. The need for the Project is to improve reliability to the communities in the Blue Ridge area that are currently served by an existing 21kV distribution line that originates in Payson and crosses the Mogollon Rim. Currently, residents of these communities experience extensive outages that have increased in number and length over the past couple of years. The introduction of a second power source is expected to provide public benefits by reducing the frequency of power interruptions and the length of time required to restore service in the event of an outage.

This letter and enclosed newsletter initiates the NEPA analysis process for this project. The analysis will be documented in an environmental assessment (EA). It is important to note that an EA is not a decision document. It is a document disclosing the environmental consequences of implementing the proposed action and alternatives to that action. If the analysis demonstrates there are no significant impacts, the responsible official documents his or her decision in a Decision Notice and Finding of No Significant Impact.

Decision Framework and Responsible Official

I, as the Forest Supervisor, am the responsible official for this project. In the decision, I will address the following three questions based on the environmental analysis:

1. Whether the proposed action should proceed as proposed, as modified by an alternative, or not at all? If it proceeds...
2. What mitigation measures and monitoring requirements will the Forest Service apply to the construction?



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3. Whether the project requires a Forest Plan amendment?

If implementation occurs, it is estimated to begin as early as spring of 2005 and completed by end of summer 2005.

Request for Comments

Your comments are important to us. We would like to know of any issues or concerns you may have about this proposal. When you respond, please make sure your comments are fully formed and as specific as possible to assist us in the analysis. Remember that the proposed transmission line is to be constructed over multiple land ownerships including approximately 6-7 miles on the Mogollon Rim Ranger District of the Coconino National Forest. The decision that the Forest Service will be making will apply to National Forest lands only.

Please send your comments to Carol Holland, Mogollon Rim Ranger District, HC31, Box 300, Happy Jack, AZ 86024, 928-477-2255, or email: comments-southwestern-coconino-mogollon@fs.fed.us. When using the electronic mailbox, you will receive an automatic reply when your comments are received. If you do not receive this automatic reply, it is your responsibility to ensure that the comments are received.

Although comments are welcome at any time, they will be most effective if received by **July 16, 2004**. If we receive your comments, you will remain on our mailing list. If we do not hear from you, your name will be removed from this project's mailing list.

This is considered the official Notice and Comment period for this project, per 36 CFR Part 215.3(a). If we do not receive any substantive comments or if we receive only supportive comments, there will be no appeal period following the completion of the EA and my subsequent decision (36 CFR 215.12(1)). Public comments (written, oral, facsimile, hand-delivered or electronic) on the Proposed Action will be accepted for 30 days following the date of publication of a Notice of Availability in the Arizona Daily Sun. Regulations prohibit extending the length of this comment period. You must comment during this official 30 day comment period, as described above, to have standing to appeal the decision when it is made.

Thank you for your time and interest in your National Forest.

Sincerely,

/s/ Carol Boyd (for)
NORA B. RASURE
Forest Supervisor