
DECISION NOTICE AND FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
SOUTH CENTRAL UTAH TELEPHONE ASSOCIATION SPECIAL USE PROJECT
U.S. FOREST SERVICE
POWELL RANGER DISTRICT
DIXIE NATIONAL FOREST
GARFIELD COUNTY, UTAH

BACKGROUND

South Central Utah Telephone Association (SCUTA) began offering telephone service to the rural areas of southern Utah in 1953. The Forest Service has received an application from SCUTA to construct a fiber optic line to the communications site at the top of Wilson Peak. At the same time SCUTA's Special Use Permit is up for reissuance. The Forest Service has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to authorize the construction of the new line, which would improve communication in the general area, update SCUTA's current permit, as well as reissue the permit for a new term.

DECISION AND RATIONALE

Based upon my review of the EA for the South Central Utah Telephone Association Special Use Project, I have decided to select and implement the proposed action and project design features as described in the EA.

The services rendered by South Central Communications are vital to the county's economy. The proposed action will have minimal to no impacts on the natural and cultural resources in the area. And the project is supported by the local communities.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

This action was originally listed as a proposal on the Dixie National Forest Schedule of Proposed Actions in February 2015 and was updated periodically during the analysis. Scoping of the proposed action was initiated in February 2015. To notify the public of this review period, a letter was mailed to stakeholders, Native American tribes, and known interested parties. Only one comment was received and it was supportive of the proposed action.

FINDINGS REQUIRED BY OTHER LAWS AND REGULATIONS

This decision is consistent with the 1986 Dixie National Forest Land Management Plan, as amended. The project was designed in conformance with the Standards and Guidelines of the Forest Plan and all other applicable laws.

A Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is below. The analyses presented in the EA and supporting specialist reports in the project record were considered and are incorporated by reference to this Decision Notice.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

The significance of environmental impacts must be considered in terms of context and intensity. This means that the significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human and national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the proposed action. In the case of a site-specific action, significance usually depends upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Intensity refers to the severity or degree of impact. (40 CFR 1508.27)

CONTEXT

The SCUTA Special Use Project is limited in context as the impacts from the project are limited to the installation of a new fiber optic line. The two other components are administrative as they are simply reissuing an existing permit. If it were not for the installation of the new fiber optic line from Highway 12 to Mt. Wilson this type of project would normally be categorically excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS.

INTENSITY

The intensity of effects was considered in terms of the following:

1. **Impacts may be both beneficial and adverse. A significant effect may exist even if the Federal agency believes that, on balance, the effect will be beneficial.** Consideration of the intensity of environmental effects is not biased by beneficial effects of the action.
2. **The degree to which the proposed action affects public health or safety.** There will be no significant effects on public health and safety because the project impacts are limited in scale and scope (See EA page 5).
3. **Unique characteristics of the geographic area, such as proximity to historic or cultural resources, park lands, prime farmlands, wetlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecologically critical areas.** There will be no significant effects on unique characteristics of the area because either none are located in the project area or the fiber optic line will be located in such a place that it avoids impact (See EA page 5).
4. **The degree to which the effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial.** The effects on the quality of the human environment are not likely to be highly controversial. There is no known credible scientific controversy over the impacts of the proposed action. (See EA page 5).
5. **The degree to which the possible effects on the human environment are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks.** The Agency has considerable

experience with actions like the one proposed. The analysis shows the effects are not uncertain, and do not involve unique or unknown risk. If it were not for the installation of the new fiber optic line from Highway 12 to Mt. Wilson this type of project would normally be categorically excluded from documentation in an EA or EIS. (See EA page 5).

6. **The degree to which the action may establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects, or represents a decision in principle about a future consideration.** The action is not likely to establish a precedent for future actions with significant effects because the project is limited in scale and scope (See EA pages 1-5).
7. **Whether the action is related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant impacts.** Impacts from the project would add cumulatively to other projects that have recently occurred in the area; however, because the project impacts are minor and unlikely to have long-term effects, the cumulative impacts are not significant (See wildlife, hydrology and soils specialist reports available in the project record).
8. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed, or eligible for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places or may cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources.** The action will have no significant adverse effect on districts, sites, highways, structures, or objects listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, because no known sites in the project area are anticipated to be affected by this project. The action will also not cause loss or destruction of significant scientific, cultural, or historical resources because no known archaeological sites nor historic properties or areas present in the project area are anticipated to be affected by this project. SHPO concurrence was received on June 23, 2015 (See EA page 5).
9. **The degree to which the action may adversely affect an endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species Act of 1973.** The action will not adversely affect any endangered or threatened species or its habitat that has been determined to be critical under the Endangered Species act of 1973. The project area is known to have suitable habitat for Utah Prairie Dog. It provides suitable foraging habit for Mexican Spotted Owl, but this species is not known to occur on Powell Ranger District. A biological assessment was prepared and a determination of May Affect Not Likely to Adversely Affect Utah Prairie Dog was made. US Fish and Wildlife Service was consulted in June 2015 and concurrence with this determination was received on August 19, 2015 (See EA page 5).
10. **Whether the action threatens to violate Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment.** The action will not violate Federal, State, and local laws or requirements for the protection of the environment. Applicable laws and regulations were considered in preparation of the

EA. The action is consistent with the 1986 Dixie National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, as amended.

After considering the effects of the actions analyzed, in terms of context and intensity, I have determined that these actions will not have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

PRE-DECISIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

A 30-day notice and comment opportunity was provided to comment on the project and only one comment was received. The written comment was not specific and was in agreement with the project, therefore this decision was not subject to a pre-decisional objection period, pursuant to 36 CFR 218.5(a).

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

This project may be implemented immediately.

CONTACT

For additional information concerning this decision, contact: Scott Henrie, Realty Specialist, Powell Ranger District, 225 E. Center St. Panguitch, UT 84759 (435)676-9320.



ANGELITA BULLETS

Forest Supervisor

9/22/2015

Date



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