

The proposed point-to-point transmission service rates for the 230/345-kV AC Intertie system are being established pursuant to the Department of Energy Organization Act (42 U.S.C. 7101, *et seq.*) and the Reclamation Act of 1902 (43 U.S.C. 371, *et seq.*), as amended and supplemented by subsequent enactments, particularly section 9(c) of the Reclamation Project Act of 1939 (43 U.S.C. 485h(c)) and section 8 of the Act of August 31, 1964 (16 U.S.C. 837g).

By Amendment No. 3 to Delegation Order No. 0204-108, published November 10, 1993 (58 FR 59716), the Secretary of Energy delegated (1) the authority to develop long-term power and transmission rates on a nonexclusive basis to the Administrator of Western; (2) the authority to confirm, approve, and place such rates in effect on an interim basis to the Deputy Secretary; and (3) the authority to confirm, approve, and place into effect on a final basis, to remand, or to disapprove such rates to the FERC. Existing DOE procedures for public participation in power rate adjustments (10 CFR Part 903) became effective on September 18, 1985 (50 FR 37835).

Regulatory Procedure Requirements

Regulatory Flexibility Analysis

The Regulatory Flexibility Act of 1980, 5 U.S.C. 601-612, requires Federal agencies to perform a regulatory flexibility analysis if a proposed rule is likely to have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. Western has determined that this action relates to rates or services offered by Western and therefore, is not a rule within the purview of the Act.

Environmental Compliance

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. 4321, *et seq.*; Council On Environmental Quality Regulations, 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508; and DOE NEPA Regulations, 10 CFR Part 1021, Western has determined that this action is categorically excluded from the preparation of an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement.

Determination Under Executive Order 12866

Western has an exemption from centralized regulatory review under Executive Order 12866; accordingly, no clearance of this notice by the Office of Management and Budget is required.

Availability of Information

All brochures, studies, comments, letters, memorandums, and other

documents made or kept by Western for the purpose of developing the proposed rates will be made available for inspection and copying at Western's Desert Southwest Regional Office, 615 South 43rd Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona.

Dated: March 25, 1998.

Michael S. Hacskeylo,

Acting Administrator.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[FRH-5990-5]

Agency Information Collection Activities: Proposed Collection; Comment Request; Environmental Information Customer Survey

AGENCY: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*), this document announces that EPA is planning to submit the following proposed Information Collection Request (ICR) to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB): *Environmental Information Customer Survey*; EPA ICR No. 1853.01. Before submitting the ICR to OMB for review and approval, EPA is soliciting public comment on specific aspects of the proposed information collection as described below.

DATES: Comments must be submitted on or before *May 27, 1998*.

ADDRESSES: Office of Policy, Planning and Evaluation, U.S. EPA, Mailcode 2164, 401 M Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20460. Information regarding this information collection request can be obtained by contacting the information contact listed below.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Heather Anne Case, telephone: (202) 260-2360, fax: (202) 260-4903, case.heather@epamail.epa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Affected entities: Entities potentially affected by this action are those members of the general public who agree to participate in these voluntary, information collection activities.

Title: *Environmental Information Customer Survey*; EPA ICR No.: 1853.01.

Abstract: This information collection request covers a series of general public surveys to be administered by the EPA's Center for Environmental Information Statistics (CEIS) and the Environmental Monitoring for Public Access and

Community Tracking (EMPACT) program over the next three years. The objectives of these survey activities are derived from EPA's *Strategic Plan* (EPA/190-E-97-002, September, 1997) which sets a national goal to improve public access to the Agency's environmental information resources. The proposed information collection activities will assist EPA to: (1) Identify and characterize segments of the Agency's information customer base (information users and audiences), and (2) assess their environmental information needs and access preferences. A customer's "environmental information need" refers to specific types of data and information, such as data on air pollution levels or information about the known health effects of a particular pollutant. An "access preference" refers to the various ways in which the public can obtain data and information (e.g., reading newspapers or reports, by telephone, using Internet Web sites, visiting EPA libraries).

The CEIS and the EMPACT program are proposing to undertake, two, near-term, national telephone surveys of the public's environmental information needs and access preferences, to assure that early program development involves all interested information users. The results of these two survey activities will be used to: (1) Improve public access to data and information; (2) identify gaps between the public's environmental information needs and currently available Agency information resources; (3) develop new environmental information products and services; (4) enhance community-level, environmental measurement and monitoring capabilities; and, (5) regularly seek customers comments on their level of satisfaction with information products and services. The CEIS and the EMPACT program further propose to carry out several additional, customer survey activities to continue customer involvement in developing new projects, products and services.

Background Information

In February 1997, EPA announced plans to create a Center for Environmental Information and Statistics (CEIS). The Center was given the responsibility to provide the public a convenient, reliable, source of information on environmental quality status and trends. The CEIS is part of a broader, Agencywide effort to improve public access to EPA's information resources. Improved public access will provide citizens the information that they need to protect public health and the environment in their communities. CEIS drafted a plan for surveying the

public's needs and access preferences for improving public access. This peer-reviewed, *Customer Survey Plan* (July 1997) employs well-established, qualitative, research techniques to ascertain customer's needs and access preferences via the survey activities described below.

The CEIS and the EMPACT program have already engaged more than 300 EPA information users in a series of discussions and public meetings to identify their environmental information needs and access preferences. Many of those involved in these meetings have asked that EPA focus on improving public access by providing centralized points of contact at the national and regional levels. They have also expressed needs for having integrated datasets and information presented at various geographic scales (national, regional, state, watershed and community). Users are interested in having quality-assured, reliable data for developing their own reports. They are also looking for comprehensive reporting on environmental quality status and trends. The proposed survey will provide insights into the kinds of information that members of the general public may want, especially those members who may be unfamiliar with the Agency's information resources.

Established in 1996, the EMPACT program is fostering a new approach to work with communities to collect, manage, and communicate environmental information on a real-time basis. The EMPACT program will be using the results of the proposed information collection activities to work with communities to make timely, accurate, and understandable environmental monitoring data available in 86 of the larger U.S. metropolitan areas.

Table 1. provides a detailed description of proposed FY 1998–2001 Environmental Information Customer Survey information collection activities.

TABLE 1:—PROPOSED FY 1998–2001: ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION CUSTOMER SURVEY ACTIVITIES

March 1998—October 1998
CEIS and the EMPACT program assessing environmental information needs and access preferences: 2,000 telephone interviews (by EPA region) 17,200 telephone interviews (in the 86 EMPACT program, metropolitan areas).
Product or service concept testing: 12 focus groups or public meetings
Actual product or service testing: 20 interviews with CEIS web site users 4 focus groups with advance web site development

TABLE 1:—PROPOSED FY 1998–2001: ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION CUSTOMER SURVEY ACTIVITIES—Continued

November 1998—October 1999
Assessing environmental information needs and access preferences: 1,000 responses to a general public questionnaire
Product or service concept testing: 40 focus groups or public meetings
Actual product or service testing: 20 focus groups 100 individual interviews
Evaluating customer satisfaction with early products and services: 1,000 responses to a web site users' questionnaire
November 1999—October 2000
Assessing environmental information needs and access preferences: 2,000 telephone interviews (by EPA region) 17,200 telephone interviews (throughout the 86 EMPACT metropolitan areas).
Testing product or service concepts: 20 focus groups or public meetings
Testing actual products or services: 20 focus groups 100 individual interviews
Evaluating customer satisfaction: 1,000 responses to a questionnaire
November 2000—October 2001
Testing product or service concepts: 10 focus groups or public meetings
Testing actual products or services: 20 focus groups 100 individual interviews
Evaluating customer satisfaction: 1000 responses to a questionnaire

CEIS and the EMPACT program will coordinate the administration of any information collection activity in overlapping geographic areas of the country, in order to minimize information collection burden, wherever possible.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a current valid OMB control number. The OMB control numbers for EPA's regulations are listed in 40 CFR part 9 and 48 CFR Chapter 15. Consistent with these regulations, EPA would like to solicit public comments to:

(i) Evaluate whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility;

(ii) Evaluate the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;

(iii) Enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and

(iv) Minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses.

Burden Statement: The estimated hour burden for CEIS and the EMPACT program national telephone surveys and other, future General Public Customer Survey activities is 26,100 hours. The average annual reporting burden is 6,500 hours and the estimated, average burden hour per response is 0.6 hours. Over the three-year period, numerous members of the public will be asked if they would voluntarily like to be included in the proposed survey activities. The CEIS and the EMPACT program estimate that about 41,500 actual respondents may become involved. Since these information collection activities are voluntary (respondents will not be asked to keep any records as a result of these activities), there are no estimated respondent costs associated with the proposed information collection activities.

Burden means the total time, effort, or financial resources expended by persons to generate, maintain, retain, or disclose or provide information to or for a Federal agency. This includes the time needed to review instructions; develop, acquire, install, and utilize technology and systems for the purposes of collecting, validating, and verifying information, processing and maintaining information, and disclosing and providing information; adjust the existing ways to comply with any previously applicable instructions and requirements; train personnel to be able to respond to a collection of information; search data sources; complete and review the collection of information; and transmit or otherwise disclose the information.

Because customer surveys involve iterative phases of activity, information collection activities, proposed to occur after this fiscal year, may change.

Dated: March 30, 1998.

Arthur Koines,

Deputy Director, Office of Strategic Planning and Environmental Data.

Denice Shaw,

EMPACT Program Manager.

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