

Notices

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests, Colorado; Nucla-Telluride Transmission Line Project

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement: Nucla-Telluride Transmission Line Project.

LOCATION: Montrose and San Miguel Counties, Colorado.

SUMMARY: The USDA Forest Service (lead agency) in cooperation with USDI Bureau of Land Management and the USDA Rural Utilities Service is considering applications to construct a 115kV transmission line in southwestern Colorado. The total length of the line is approximately 57 miles. The objectives of the project are to provide loop transmission to the Telluride, Colorado service area; improve the quality of electric service to the Norwood, Colorado service area; improve the service to the substations between Sunshine and Hesperus; and provide another interconnection to the Nucla generation plant. The uncertain reliability of the Telluride electric service will pose a health and safety hazard in the near future, if not corrected. The severe winter conditions of the area require reliable electric service to assure safe living conditions. The project is designed to meet this immediate human health and safety issue, and provide other benefits to rural electric users at the same time.

Preliminary issues related to potential direct and indirect resource effects include: visual resource impacts in a recreational setting; cultural resource encounters and accompanying mitigation steps; habitat alterations where special status species occur including the Gunnison sage grouse

Mexican spotted owl, bald eagle and southwestern willow flycatcher; and perceived public health and safety concerns related to high voltage transmission facilities.

Three public workshops have been held to gain a perspective on the range of issues. Alternatives include: rebuilding an existing 69kV line for a large portion of the distance with new construction tying to the Telluride substation; and relocation alternatives which will focus on minimizing residence and transmission line intersections, improving line location related to resource impacts and combining facility corridors.

DATES: Comments in response to this Notice of Intent concerning the scope of the analysis should be received in writing by June 30, 1998. Scoping meetings are scheduled for May 26, 27, and 28, 1998 in Redvale, Norwood and Telluride, Colorado respectively. The draft environmental impact statement is scheduled for fall 1998 and the final in winter 1999.

The comment period on the draft environmental impact statement will be 45 days from the date of the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the notice of availability in the **Federal Register**.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Norwood Ranger District, PO Box 388, Norwood, Colorado 81423, ATTN: Steve Wells.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Steve Wells at (970) 327-4261.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Forest Service believes, at this early stage, it is important to give reviewers notice of several court rulings related to public participation in the environmental review process. First, reviewers of draft environmental impact statements must structure their participation in the environmental review of the proposal so that it is meaningful and alerts an agency to the reviewer's position and contentions. *Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Corp. v. NRDC*, 435 U.S. 519, 553 (1978). Also, environmental objections that could be raised at the draft environmental impact statement stage but that are not raised until after completion of the final environmental impact statement may be waived or dismissed by the courts. *City of Angoon v. Hodel*, 803 F.2d 1016, 1022 (9th Cir. 1986) and *Wisconsin Heritages, Inc. v. Harris*, 490 F. Supp. 1334, 1338 (E.D.

Wis. 1980). Because of these court rulings, it is very important that those interested in this proposed action participate by the close of the 45 day comment period so that substantive comments and objections are made available to the Forest Service at a time when it can meaningfully consider them and respond to them in the final environmental impact statement.

To assist the Forest Service in identifying and considering issues and concerns on the proposed action, comments on the draft environmental impact statement should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if comments refer to specific pages or chapters of the draft statement. Comments may also address the adequacy of the draft environmental impact statement or the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the statement. Reviewers may wish to refer to the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for implementing the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act at 40 CFR 1503.3 in addressing these points.

Other Potential Permits

USDI Fish & Wildlife Service informal consultation—Section 7 Threatened and Endangered Species Act; USDOD Army Corps of Engineers—Nationwide Permit—Section 404 Clean Water Act; Montrose County Building Permit; San Miguel County Building Permit; Certificate for Public Convenience—PUC, Colorado.

Dated: April 24, 1998.

Robert L. Storch,

Forest Supervisor, Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

National Agricultural Statistics Service

Notice of Intent To Seek Approval To Conduct an Information Collection

AGENCY: National Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. No. 104-13) and Office of Management and Budget (OMB)