

DECISION RECORD
For
An Environmental Assessment
Of Valley Electric Association's
Tolicha Peak 24.9-kV Distribution Line Project

BLM EA Number: DOI-BLM-NV-B020-2013-0063-EA

INTRODUCTION

The BLM's purpose is to provide Valley Electric Association, Inc. with authorized use of the public land managed by the BLM for the engineering design and construction method refinements of electrical distribution facilities associated with the 24.9-kV Tolicha Peak Distribution Line Rebuild Project described in the proposed action. These refinements include the use of H-frame structures, the use of a stringing helicopter and a twin-prop helicopter, the addition of bird diverters to guy wires, the addition of TE Raysulate raptor protection and implementing minor design changes to the insulators, cross arms, conductors, cable shield wire, and ground clearances. The distribution line begins from the VEA Beatty Substation and terminates at the Tolicha Peak Air Force facilities located on the western side of the Nevada Test and Training Range (NTTR) on public lands administered by the Tonopah Field Office in southwestern Nye County, Nevada.

DECISION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Tonopah Field Office has determined that the construction of the 24.9-kV distribution line with the final engineering and construction method refinements outlined in the proposed action would not result in significant impacts to the environment and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required based on the attached Environmental Assessment (EA) DOI-BLM-NV-B020-2013-0063-EA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

Three alternatives were discussed in the EA. Two of the three alternatives were considered but eliminated from further analysis. A No Action alternative was considered; however, refinements to the original design and construction were required to improve reliability, reduce project costs, and to address environmental concerns.

As a result of the analysis presented in the EA, it is my decision to approve the proposed action, to amend right-of-way (ROW) grant, N-88360, and renew the short-term ROW grant, N-88568.

CONFORMANCE

I have determined that the proposed action is in conformance with the Tonopah RMP and Record of Decision (1997) and is consistent with the applicable plans and policies of Nye County, the State of Nevada, tribal and federal agencies. The proposed project is in compliance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976, the the Endangered Species Act, and the National Historic Preservation Act. Compliance with these acts is further provided through stipulations which are part of the EA.

MITIGATION MEASURES

Applicable measures for the protection of desert tortoises (*Gopherus agassizii*) required by the *BLM Programmatic Biological Opinion for Implementation of Proposed Actions within the Desert Tortoise Habitat Administered by the [BLM], Tonopah Field Office, Nye County, Nevada* and the September 2013, *Reinitiation of Formal Consultation for the Valley Electric Association 24.9-kV Distribution Line*, would continue to be implemented.

Best management practices would be used in the construction of the power line. Specific project stipulations address the following:

- Discovery of any cultural and/or paleontological resources.
- Weed control.
- Compliance with applicable local, state, and Federal environmental laws and regulations.
- Right-of-way to be maintained in a sanitary condition.
- Soil reclamation.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

Consultation and coordination was carried out with the Federal, state, and local agencies and interested parties, as follows:

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Nevada State Clearinghouse
- Timbisha Shoshone Tribe (Native American Information sharing)
- Nevada Department of Wildlife
- Town of Beatty, Nevada
- Nye County, Nevada
- Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT)
- Valley Electric Association, Inc.
- United States Air Force, 98th Range Wind Plans and Programs, Nellis AFB

RATIONALE

1. The proposed action is consistent with promoting the utilization of public lands in common with respect to engineering and technological compatibility and land use plans (43 CFR 2801.2(c)).
2. The proposed action supports coordination with State and local governments, interested individuals and appropriate quasi-governmental entities (43 CFR 2801.2(d)).
3. The recommendation to authorize right-of-way grants on Federal lands meets the stated objective "Lands and Rights-of-Way" page 18-19, and page 33, Tonopah Resource Management Plan, approved October 2, 1997;
4. The proposed action is consistent with the goals of the *Nye County Comprehensive Master Plan* (Nye County 2011).

//s// Timothy J. Coward

9/24/13

Timothy J. Coward, Field Manager
Tonopah Field Office

Date