



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Medford District Office
3040 Biddle Road
Medford, Oregon 97504
email address: BLM_OR_MD_Mail@blm.gov

SEP 29 2015

IN REPLY REFER TO:

1792 (ORM050)

Dear Interested Public:

The BLM is preparing an Environmental Assessment (EA) to meet National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements for Pacific Power's proposed *Sam's Valley Reinforcement Project*, located in Jackson and Josephine Counties in Oregon. Pacific Power has requested the BLM approve an amendment to a right-of-way grant they currently hold in order to accommodate the addition of a 230 kilovolt (kV) transmission line along an existing route. The BLM decision to approve or deny Pacific Power's right-of-way grant application constitutes a federal action and requires the preparation of an EA in accordance with NEPA.

What is the Sam's Valley Reinforcement Project?

Pacific Power proposes to construct, operate, and maintain a 230 kV transmission line, which will run from the existing Grants Pass Substation in Josephine County near Grants Pass, Oregon east to a proposed new 500 kV substation in Jackson County, Oregon north of Medford (Figure 1). The proposed transmission line on BLM-managed lands would be approximately 4.34 miles long and constructed as part of a double circuit with the existing 115 kV circuit line. This double circuit line would carry both the existing 115 kV line and the new 230 kV line on new structures and take advantage of the existing right-of-way to greatest extent possible. The new structures may be taller and larger in order to support additional weight and maintain height clearances. Additional structure foundations may be required. Span lengths are typically about 600 to 1,000 feet. This variation is due to topography, structure type, engineering constraints, and other considerations.

The majority of the project (approximately 75 percent), including the new substation site, would be located on private land. As mentioned earlier, Pacific Power has a right-of-way grant from the BLM for an existing 115 kV transmission line corridor which is approximately 100 feet wide and 4.34 miles long. The total length of the new proposed project, including agency administered and privately owned land, is approximately 18 miles long. Pacific Power is now requesting approximately 35 feet (18.7 acres) of additional right-of-way on BLM-managed lands to

accommodate the new double circuited line. For portions of the project that cross private land, additional right-of-way easements would be negotiated with landowners. The new substation would be located on private land owned by Pacific Power.

Why is the Project Being Proposed?

Pacific Power has proposed this in order to increase reliability of the electric system in the area. To meet the requirements of the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) and Western Electric Coordination Council (WECC) standards, Pacific Power must plan and operate their electric system so that, in the event of unplanned line losses or other failures due to events such as fires or system overloads in severe weather, effects are manageable and negative consequences are mitigated. System modeling indicates the current system is at risk of unacceptable failure if unplanned outages or other failures occurred. The project is intended to reduce the possibility of large scale load dropping in Medford, Grants Pass, and Crescent City in the event of an outage, thereby increasing reliability. System modeling indicates that a new 230 kV line from the existing Grants Pass substation to the proposed new substation would provide the redundancy required if the 230 kV Grants Pass – Dixonville line becomes the only supply during an outage of the existing 230 kV Grants Pass – Meridian line.

The BLM is assessing this proposal to determine whether to grant the modification of the right-of-way on BLM-managed lands, deny it, or grant the modification with conditions. The BLM is also assessing Pacific Power's proposal to determine if it is consistent and in compliance with the District Resource Management Plan. The Medford District Resource Management Plan (RMP ROD 1995) includes the following objective:

“Continue to make BLM-administered lands available for needed rights-of-way where consistent with local comprehensive plans, Oregon statewide planning goals and rules, and the exclusion and avoidance areas identified in this RMP,” (p.82).

What is BLM's Role?

NEPA requires all federal agencies to evaluate the environmental, social, and economic effects of proposed actions on public land. The BLM is preparing an EA that will document the estimated environmental effects of the proposed project. The BLM will use the EA to decide whether to grant, grant with conditions, or deny Pacific Power's application to construct, operate, and maintain a 230 kV transmission line across lands managed by the BLM. If granted, the BLM may include terms, conditions, and stipulations that the BLM determines to be in the public interest (43 C.F.R. 2805.10). This includes modifying the proposed use or changing the route or location of the facilities on public land.

Although the BLM is the lead federal agency for the NEPA review process for the project, the BLM's decision regarding land use authorization for the proposed transmission line constitutes only a small portion of the overall project. A number of other local- or state- level permits and approvals would be necessary to construct the project including, but not limited to, Jackson County land use approval for development of the new substation. Additional right-of-way easements will also be required for the remaining portions of the project that cross privately owned land.

What is the BLM Asking the Public?

To appropriately address issues relevant to the proposal in the forthcoming EA, the BLM is seeking public input. If you would like to provide information on potential issues or concerns that the EA should address, please submit your comments to Tony Kerwin, BLM Medford District Office, 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR 97504, or email to blm_or_md_mail@blm.gov. Comments should be as specific as possible.

If you do not have comments at this time but would like to be kept informed as planning progresses on this project, please complete and return the enclosed "Response Form" (Attachment 1) and your name will be maintained on the mailing list for this project. Your input will be most useful if it is received by **November 3, 2015**; however, comments will be accepted and reviewed up until the time a decision on the project is made. Those responding to this or other public notices concerning the Sam's Valley Reinforcement Project will be notified when the *Sam's Valley Reinforcement Project Environmental Assessment* becomes available for public review.

Please note that all written submissions from private individuals in response to this notice, including your name, address, telephone number, email address, or other personal identifying information may be made available for public inspection and disclosure, unless you specifically request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your personal identifying information from public review or disclosure, you must state this at the beginning of your written comment and provide justification for doing so. We will honor such requests to the extent allowed by law, but you should be aware that release of that information may be required under certain circumstances. All submissions from organizations or businesses and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of an organization or business will be made available for public inspection and disclosure in their entirety.

Further information on the proposed project is available on Pacific Power's website at: <http://www.pacificorp.com/tran/tp/sams-valley.html>. Information is also available from the BLM Medford District Office, 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR 97504 or Tony Kerwin, District

Environmental Planner, (541) 618-2402. Thank you for your interest in management of your public lands.

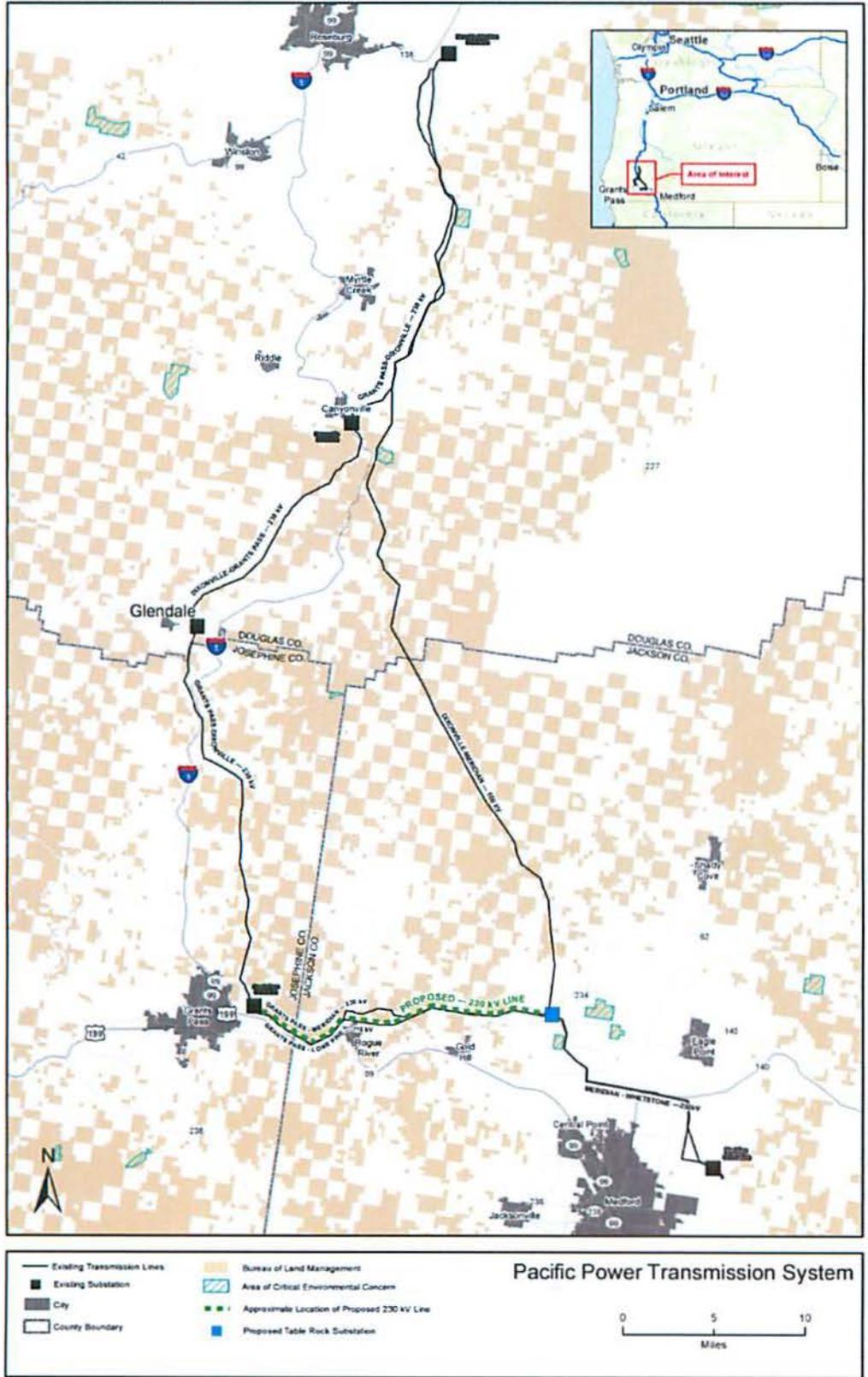
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Teresa J. Trulock". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Teresa" and last name "Trulock" clearly distinguishable.

Teresa J. Trulock
Butte Falls Field Manager
Medford District BLM

Enclosures

Figure 1: Project Map



Attachment 1

INTEREST RESPONSE FORM

ATTN: Medford District BLM
Butte Falls Resource Area Planning
Sam's Valley Reinforcement Project
3040 Biddle Road
Medford, OR 97504

Please include me on the *Sam's Valley Reinforcement Project* mailing list:

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY:

Name: _____

Street: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

Email: _____

I prefer to be informed via: Email Postal Service Mail

We are trying to save paper and conserve resources. Please respond if you wish to be kept informed; otherwise, you will be removed from the mailing list.