



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Albuquerque District
Socorro Field Office
901 S Highway 85
Socorro, New Mexico 87801
www.blm.gov/nm/st/en.html



July 27, 2016

Dear Reader:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announces the availability of the Environmental Assessment (EA)(DOI-BLM-NM-A020-2014-0021-EA) addressing the El Paso Electric (EPE) application to amend their existing 345kV transmission line Right-of-Way (ROW). The existing transmission line extends from a tie-in point just east of the Luna Substation near Deming, New Mexico, to the Red Hill tie-in point in western New Mexico, east of the Arizona-New Mexico border and 12 miles east of the Springerville Switchyard near Springerville, Arizona. The transmission line crosses lands administered by the BLM, Forest Service, State of New Mexico, and private lands.

The BLM Socorro Field Office (SFO) is the lead agency and is preparing the EA in consultation with the Forest Service to ensure compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), and Department of the Interior regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508 for CEQ, and 43 CFR Part 46 for the BLM, and BLM NEPA Handbook [H-1790-1]). The EA assesses the potential environmental impacts resulting from EPE's proposed action to use the footprint of the original construction roads to the greatest extent practicable, and to improve and maintain clear access to support routine patrol and maintenance of the transmission line facilities.

The EA will form the basis for the BLM and the Forest Service decisions to issue, issue with modifications, or deny the right-of-way grant amendments requested by EPE. To ensure a meaningful evaluation and public involvement, the agencies have elected to receive comments from the public during the 30-day review period through the BLM national register for Land Use Planning and NEPA documents (ePlanning) https://eplanning.blm.gov/epl-front-office/eplanning/nepa/nepa_register.do. The register will allow you to access the EA and the BLM's unsigned Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and provide comments on-line. The SFO will receive all comments for the agencies during the 30-day public review period. The 30-day public review period will begin Wednesday July 27, 2016 and close on Thursday August 25, 2016. Any substantive comments received will be routed to the appropriate agency for review and consideration. The BLM and Forest Service will separately respond to substantive comments that reflect each individual agency. However, a single administrative record will be kept.

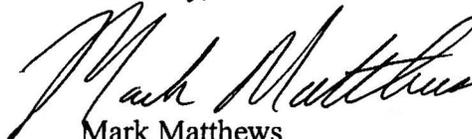
After the 30-day period is complete the BLM and Forest Service would pursue separate decisions and abide by agency regulations. The BLM will issue a final decision and FONSI if no substantive comments are received. The Forest Service will issue a separate draft Decision Notice and FONSI as part of the Pre-decisional Administrative Review Process

(Objection) under 36 CFR Part 218. Forest Service documents will be mailed and also available on the Gila National Forest Service projects web page:
<http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/gila/landmanagement/projects>.

To be eligible to file an Objection on the Forest Service draft Decision Notice and FONSI for this project, only individuals or entities (as defined by 36 CFR 218.2) who submit timely and specific written comments (as defined by 36 CFR 218.2) about this proposed project or activity during this or another public comment period established during this project will be eligible to file an objection. Other requirements to be eligible to submit an objection are defined by 36 CFR 218.25 (a)(3) and include name, postal address, title of the project and signature or other verification of identity upon request and the identity of the individual or entity who authored the comments. Individual members of an entity must submit their own individual comments in order to have eligibility to object as an individual. A timely submission will be determined as outlined in 36 CFR 218.25 (a)(4). It is the responsibility of the sender to ensure timely receipt of any comments submitted.

We look forward to your continued assistance and participation as we move forward. We also thank you for your patience and understanding with this unique joint agency effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Matthews". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Mark Matthews
Field Manager