



PO-07-671

Department of Energy
Western Area Power Administration
Upper Great Plains Customer Service Region
P.O. Box 35800
Billings, MT 59107-5800

RECEIVED

March 5, 2008

MAR 10 2008

SUBJECT: Williston – Tioga 230-kV Transmission Line Project

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Dear Interested Party:

Basin Electric Power Cooperative (Basin Electric) is proposing to construct a 230-kV transmission line from Western Area Power Administration's (Western) Williston Substation west of Williston, North Dakota, to the Tioga Substation east of Tioga, North Dakota. The proposed project, known as the Williston – Tioga 230-kV Transmission Line Project (Project) is needed to increase the load serving capacity in northwestern North Dakota.

Basin Electric has requested an interconnection with Western's transmission system at the Williston Substation. This interconnection request triggers a Federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review. Before Western can approve the construction and interconnection of the proposed Project, the potential environmental impacts must be assessed.

Western intends to prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) for this project in accordance with NEPA. The EA will provide Western with a framework to analyze and judge the magnitude of expected environmental impacts from the construction and operation of the proposed Project. If Western finds that there are no significant environmental impacts, a "Finding of No Significant Impact" will be issued for the proposed Project. If the EA process identifies unmitigated significant impacts, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process will be initiated to take a more detailed look at the impacts and alternative approaches to the proposed Project.

The proposed Project corridor would begin at Western's Williston Substation and proceed northeast approximately 47 miles to the Tioga Substation. The proposed transmission line would be constructed with steel H-frame structures. A fiber optic ground wire would be installed as one of two ground wires for Basin Electric's mobile radio communications in this remote area. Width of the right-of-way for the transmission line would be 125 feet.

Public involvement is an important and integral part of Western's NEPA process. Scoping involves actively acquiring input from interested Federal, State, tribal and local agencies, and the public. Information gained during scoping assists Western in identifying potential environmental issues, alternatives, and mitigation measures associated with constructing and operating the proposed Project. Scoping also helps narrow the scope of issues so the analysis of environmental impacts can focus on areas of highest interest and concern.

There will be a Western scoping period to ensure that interested members of the public; potentially affected landowners and lessees; and Federal, State, local, and tribal agencies have an opportunity to provide input on the scope of the EA and the alternatives that will be addressed in the EA. In conjunction with the scoping period Western will also hold public open-house scoping meetings near

the proposed Project area. At the scoping meetings Western staff will provide information about the proposed Project, answer questions, and take verbal and written comments from interested parties. Western wants you to comment on the proposed Project, offer suggestions to improve the proposal, and even suggest alternative actions. Western is also asking you to identify any issues of concern about potential environmental impacts.

Open-house public scoping meetings will be held at the following locations:

March 17, 2008
El Rancho Motor Hotel
1323 2nd Avenue West
Williston, North Dakota

March 18, 2008
Jungle Restaurant (former American Legion)
121 South Main Street
Tioga, North Dakota

You may attend any time between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. You will have the opportunity to view proposed Project information and NEPA process displays. The open-house scoping meeting will be very informal, with Western and Basin Electric representatives available for discussion. Written comments may be left with Western's representative at the scoping meeting or provided by fax, e-mail, or the U.S. Postal Service to Mr. Rod O'Sullivan at the following address:

Rod O'Sullivan, Environmental Protection Specialist
Upper Great Plains Region
Western Area Power Administration
P.O. Box 35800
Billings, MT 59107-5800
Phone: (406) 247-7385
Fax: (406) 247-7408
E-mail: OSullivan@wapa.gov

Comments on the Project scope and alternatives should be received by April 18, 2008, to ensure consideration in defining the scope for the EA. Comments on other aspects of the proposed Project will be accepted and considered throughout the NEPA process. If you wish to be added to the Project mailing list and/or receive a copy of the Draft EA, please return the enclosed response sheet.

Western looks forward to your participation in the EA process. If you have any questions, concerns, or comments, please contact Mr. Rod O'Sullivan.

Sincerely,



Nicholas J. Stas
Environmental Manager

Enclosure

Fold 2

**Rod O'Sullivan
Western Area Power Administration
P.O. Box 35800
Billings, MT 59107-5800**

Fold 1

Williston to Tioga Transmission Project mailing list

To have your name added or removed from our mailing list for this project, please check the appropriate box and return this comment form to us. If you do not ask us to remove your name from our mailing list, we will send you future EA-related announcements.

Add my name to the mailing list

Remove my name from the mailing list

Sign up to receive the EA

To receive the Environmental Assessment for review when it is available, please check below.

Send me the EA for review

Note: Fold the comment form on the lines with the return address showing, tape it closed and drop it in the mail to us. Additional sheets may be attached.