



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
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October 3, 2012

In Reply Refer To:
1610 (P010/9100)

Dear Reader:

Enclosed is the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) entitled: Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Proposed Sun Valley to Morgan 500/230kV Transmission Line Project, and the Draft Bradshaw-Harquahala Resource Management Plan Amendment. This document has been developed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, as amended. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prepared this document in consultation with several cooperating agencies, including the U.S. Air Force - Luke Air Force Base, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Arizona State Land Department; the Maricopa Association of Governments, the cities of Peoria and Surprise, Arizona; and taking into account public comments received during the scoping effort. The Draft EIS/Draft Resource Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) is open for a 90-day review period beginning the date the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency publishes the Notice of Availability of the Draft EIS/Draft RMPA in the Federal Register.

The Draft EIS/Draft RMPA has been prepared to analyze the potential impacts of granting a right-of way (ROW) to Arizona Public Service (APS) for the purpose of constructing and operating a 500/230kV overhead transmission line from the Sun Valley Substation to the Morgan Substation. The Proposed Sun Valley to Morgan 500/230kV Transmission Line Project (Project) would be located on a combination of BLM-managed public lands, Arizona State Trust lands, and private lands in northern Maricopa County, northwest of Phoenix, Arizona. The Project is an approximately 38-mile long overhead transmission line on monopole structures with a 200-foot right-of-way that would head out of the Sun Valley Substation in the northwest portion of the Town of Buckeye to the Morgan Substation in the Town of Peoria, within an area certificated for the Project by the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC). The BLM-managed public lands within the Project Area are managed under the existing Bradshaw-Harquahala RMP. Under the Proposed Action, the RMP would need to be amended to establish a utility corridor and change the Visual Resource Management Class designation for BLM-managed public lands that would be crossed by the proposed route.

The Draft EIS/Draft RMPA is being released to inform the public and interested parties of potential impacts associated with implementing the proponent's proposal, as well as alternatives identified by the agencies. The Draft EIS/Draft RMPA is not a decision document. Rather, it is a document that will inform the BLM's final decisions on whether to amend the RMP and whether

to issue a ROW grant. The BLM will only be issuing decisions on those portions of the APS request that involve a ROW on public lands; however, the Draft EIS/Draft RMPA will also inform other regulatory agencies, from which permits would be required.

The public was provided a 45-day scoping period at the beginning of the EIS/RMPA process to identify potential issues and concerns associated with the Proposed Action. Scoping comments were used to help develop alternatives to the Proposed Action, to guide the analysis of potential effects from the Project, and to identify potential mitigations for inclusion in the Draft EIS/Draft RMPA. In addition to the Proposed Action (as described above), the Draft EIS/Draft RMPA analyzes three Action Alternatives including: Alternative 1: Proposed Action with Additional Corridor; Alternative 2: ROW South of SR74; and Alternative 3: Carefree Highway Route. A Sub-alternative proposed by the Arizona State Land Department is also being analyzed. This document analyzes a No Action alternative, under which the BLM would not issue a ROW, the Bradshaw-Harquahala RMP would not be amended, and the transmission line would not be constructed as described under the Proposed Action or Action Alternatives. However, APS is committed to construction of the transmission line, and could pursue other options to develop the Project without using public lands.

The BLM has identified the Proposed Action route crossing BLM-managed lands as the Agency Preferred Alternative route for the proposed transmission line, including best management practices and mitigation measures, with modifications as necessary. Modifications could consist of minor route deviations for micro-siting of structures or segments of the line at the time of route engineering to minimize impacts to visual and other sensitive resources, as indicated in the mitigation measures. However, all potential modifications would still allow for the transmission line route to remain within the ACC-certificated route.

Under the Agency Preferred Alternative, the BLM would approve a 200-foot wide ROW within the existing designated utility corridor northeast of the Sun Valley Substation. In addition, the BLM would amend the RMP to:

- Designate a 200-foot wide single-use utility corridor on public lands managed by the BLM north of SR 74;
- Designate a multi-use utility corridor on 1,013 acres of public lands managed by the BLM south of SR 74 to address potential future BLM management considerations; and,
- Change the existing VRM Class designations of 2,362 acres north of SR 74 and 1,013 acres south of SR 74 from Class III to Class IV to allow for the newly established utility corridors.

The BLM is seeking comments on the Draft EIS/Draft RMPA to establish the adequacy of the document so that it can prepare a Final EIS/Proposed RMPA. Comments will be accepted for 90 days following the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's publication of the Notice of Availability in the Federal Register. All timely comments, postmarked by February 1, 2013, on the Draft EIS will be considered in the preparation of the Final EIS, currently scheduled for release in summer 2013. All substantive comments and information submitted will be summarized and addressed in the Final EIS/Draft RMPA. Substantive comments are ones that,

with reasonable basis, question the accuracy of the information in the Draft EIS/Draft RMPA the adequacy of, methodology for, or assumptions used for the environmental analysis, present new information relevant to the analysis, present alternatives other than those analyzed and cause changes or revision in one or more of the alternatives. The BLM can best use your comments and information if received within the review period. Comments may be submitted electronically to the Project at SunValley-Morgan@blm.gov. Please include "Sun Valley to Morgan DEIS/Draft RMPA" in the subject line of your email message. Comments may also be submitted by mail to: Proposed APS Sun Valley to Morgan Project, ATTN: Joe Incardine, National Project Manager, BLM Phoenix District Office, 21605 North 7th Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona 85027-2929.

The BLM will host public hearings in Peoria, Wittmann, and Phoenix, Arizona, to provide an overview of the proposed Project and take public comments on the proposed Project and the Draft EIS/Draft RMPA. The public hearings will be announced by the BLM at least 15 days in advance through public notices, local media news release and mailings.

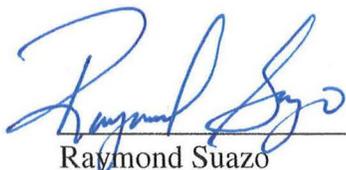
Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information with your comments, be advised that your entire comments, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. Although you may ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Printed copies of the Draft EIS/Draft RMPA are available for review at the Hassayampa Field Office and the Arizona State Office. The document may also be viewed at public libraries in Maricopa County, Arizona:

- City of Peoria Public Library, 8463 West Monroe Street, Peoria, Arizona 85345
- Sunrise Mountain Public Library, 21109 North 98th Avenue, Peoria, Arizona 85382
- Northwest Regional Library, 16089 North Bullard Avenue, Surprise, Arizona 85374
- Phoenix Public Library, Burton Barr Central Library, 1221 North Central Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona 85004

You may also access the document on the Internet at:
<http://www.blm.gov/az/st/en/prog/energy/aps-sunvalley.html>

Sincerely,



Raymond Suazo
State Director, Arizona State Office



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Field Manager, Hassayampa