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Draft Environmental Impact Statement and
Resource Management Plan Amendment
for the
Arizona Public Service Sun Valley to
Morgan 500/230kV Transmission Line Project
~~ Public Hearing ~~

December 13, 2012

Bureau of Land Management National Training Center
9828 North 31st Avenue
Phoenix, Arizona 85051
10:30 a.m.

driver and nix

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1 MS. ELLIS: Folks, if you could go ahead and take
2 your seats.

3 Good morning, everyone.

4 Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Grace Ellis, and I
5 will be facilitating this meeting on the Draft Environmental
6 Impact Statement, or EIS, for the APS proposed Sun Valley to
7 Morgan Transmission Line Project and proposed Resource
8 Management Plan amendment.

9 A little housekeeping: In the event of an
10 emergency, we have exits, out back. Restrooms are to the back
11 and then to the left. And there are also refreshments out in
12 the hallway, as well.

13 Can everyone hear me okay? Yeah? Okay.

14 This hearing is being held in accordance with the
15 provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act and the
16 regulations that are published by the Council on Environmental
17 Quality.

18 The purpose of this hearing is for the Bureau of
19 Land Management, or BLM, to receive public comments on the
20 Draft EIS for the proposed project and Resource Management Plan
21 Amendment, commonly referred to as the Draft EIS/Draft RMPA.

22 I'd like to explain my role in the hearing. I'm
23 the facilitator with Galileo Project, LLC, in Tempe. I was
24 asked by the BLM to be this evening's facilitator -- or this
25 afternoon.

1 MR. INCARDINE: Morning, morning.

2 MS. ELLIS: This morning's facilitator. Sorry.

3 But I do not represent the BLM, and nothing I say
4 or do is intended to represent the views of the BLM.

5 My role as facilitator is to ensure that we have a
6 fair, orderly, and impartial forum in which all who wish to be
7 heard have the opportunity to speak. In summary, it's
8 important that you understand that I will be serving as an
9 impartial moderator for this hearing.

10 Everything said in this hearing will be recorded by
11 the court reporter, and a transcript of this hearing will be
12 included as part of the administrative record.

13 This hearing will be conducted in two parts.
14 First, a representative from BLM will outline the National
15 Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA, process and summarize the
16 analysis presented in the Draft EIS/Draft RMPA.

17 The second part of the meeting will be your
18 opportunity to provide comments and make statements for the
19 record. The input you give will provide the decision-makers
20 for the project the benefits of your knowledge of the local
21 area and your concerns about the Draft EIS/Draft RMPA analysis.

22 This hearing is about the adequacy of the analysis
23 presented by the BLM in the Draft EIS/Draft RMPA.

24 When making statements for the record, please focus
25 on the EIS analysis, rather than concerns about the

1 nonenvironmental issues that will take time away from others'
2 opportunities to comment on the analysis. Although, it looks
3 like we probably have plenty of time today.

4 When you came in, you should have been asked to
5 register and fill out a Speaker Request Card. But we don't
6 have any of those filled out today. Okay, so what we can do is
7 we can raise our hands, if folks want to stand up and make a
8 comment. Okay.

9 Yeah, just come up to the microphone.

10 At this time, then, I would like to request that
11 all cell phones be turned off or in silent mode.

12 So, folks, you have three choices for submitting
13 comments to the BLM on the Draft RMPA/Draft EIS. And you can
14 choose any or all of the following options. You can present
15 oral comments to the court reporter today as part of your
16 presentation. As I mentioned earlier, all oral comments made
17 during the hearing will be recorded by a court reporter.

18 You may also elect to provide written comments by
19 placing them in the comment box available at the back of the
20 room. Or you may provide comments by mail or e-mail. Written
21 comments will be accepted through mail or e-mail until
22 February 8, 2013, at the address shown.

23 All comments made at this hearing or provided in
24 writing will be given equal consideration. We'll have this
25 address up again at the end of the hearing.

1 Also, for your convenience, we have self-addressed
2 comment forms available at the back of the room.

3 And before we move forward with the BLM
4 presentation, I'd like to -- I'd like to introduce the
5 cooperating agency representatives attending this hearing.
6 Cooperating agencies, of course, are agencies that have been
7 involved in the development and review of the EIS.

8 So I'm going to name off the agencies, and if
9 you're with that agency, would you mind just standing up and
10 saying your name? Would that be all right?

11 Environmental protection agency? Luke Air Force
12 Base? AZ State Land Department?

13 MR. OJEDA: Ruben Ojeda.

14 MS. ELLIS: Thank you.

15 Maricopa Association of Governments or MAG? City
16 of Peoria?

17 MR. JACQUES: Chris Jacques.

18 MS. ELLIS: City of Surprise?

19 MS. SAVAGE: Karen Savage.

20 MS. ELLIS: Thank you.

21 At this time, Mr. Joe Incardine, the BLM National
22 Project Manager, will begin his presentation.

23 MR. INCARDINE: Thank you, Grace.

24 Now, as most of you know, this has been -- we've
25 had multiple levels of BLM involvement. In addition to myself,

1 we have the Arizona State Office -- that's you -- the Phoenix
2 District, and the Hassayampa Field Office.

3 MR. HOWES: Rem Howes.

4 MR. INCARDINE: And our BLM contractors. We've got
5 JBR Environmental and Galileo. And I'd like to also
6 acknowledge APS and their contractors.

7 I think most of you know that the proposed project
8 is in Maricopa County, within the cities of Buckeye, Peoria,
9 and Surprise. It's a 38-mile route. There is nine miles of
10 public land involved.

11 Arizona Public Service has filed an application
12 with the BLM for a right-of-way, on public lands that are
13 managed by the BLM, to construct an above-ground electrical
14 transmission system consisting of a single series of tower
15 structures holding two high-voltage circuits: one, a 500kV; and
16 the other, a 230kV.

17 It crosses nine miles of Federal land in two
18 separate locations. And management decisions for these Federal
19 lands are subject to the Bradshaw-Harquahala Resource
20 Management Plan, which is managed under the Hassayampa Field
21 Office.

22 Two decisions to be made: One is whether to amend
23 the Bradshaw-Harquahala RMP, and the other is whether to issue
24 a right-of-way grant to APS.

25 The proposed project crosses BLM lands, as

1 indicated, both in Buckeye, where we already have -- There we
2 go. The -- the area in Buckeye, we already have an existing
3 utility corridor. And, in Peoria, to the northeast, there is
4 no utility corridor and at this point does not conform with the
5 RMP.

6 We have two concurrent processes, and one for the
7 right-of-way application process, and one for the RMP
8 Amendment. If you want to review that a little closer, we have
9 the board, right back there. This is going to be hard to see
10 everything on there.

11 We had a meeting with you all in April 2011, when
12 we conducted public scoping. And then, in June 2011, we had,
13 here in Phoenix, an economic strategies workshop. We collected
14 comments from those meetings and used that to build the Draft
15 EIS.

16 Right now, we're within a 90-day comment period for
17 the Draft EIS. As you know, the Draft was published,
18 November 9th, and it will go -- the 90-day comment period will
19 go till February 8th.

20 The Final EIS is proposed for the Summer of 2013,
21 and record of -- and the Record of Decision for the Fall of
22 2013.

23 Issues we've heard: Visual resources were of
24 concern, especially adjacent to SR 74. Health and safety
25 issues, mostly to homeowners and aviation, recreation.

1 Socioeconomic issues, especially related to
2 property values. We have recreational impacts. People were
3 concerned about public land access, maintaining public land
4 access, both for commercial and public purposes.

5 The alternatives we looked at, additional to the
6 proposed action, are three action alternatives and a no-action
7 alternative, as required by NEPA.

8 I wanted to talk a little bit about what the
9 alternatives are. I think most of you are aware of what the
10 alternatives are, but I just wanted to speak a little bit to
11 that. The proposed action is for a 200-foot right-of-way and a
12 single-use BLM corridor within the A -- the ACC-certified
13 route.

14 The RMP would need to be amended for the proposed
15 action.

16 As you can see, on the maps, the majority of the
17 project is on State Trust Lands.

18 For Alternative One, the corridor would be a
19 200-foot-wide right-of-way, with a multi-use corridor to the
20 south. And -- and, actually, it would be a half mile. It
21 would be added to the corridor. It would be a half a mile
22 wide, even though the right-of-way would be 200 foot wide.
23 And, again, the RMP would have to be amended.

24 Alternative Two is a right-of-way on the south side
25 of 74. It avoids some of the BLM land, where -- of concern to

1 the north. And it has a 200-foot-wide right-of-way within a
2 BLM multi-use corridor immediately to the south, the little
3 area that we call a key-shaped parcel. And it would cross a
4 lot more private land.

5 Alternative Three is the Carefree Highway route, a
6 200-foot right-of-way parallel to the Carefree Highway
7 alignment. And the RMP would not have to be amended for this
8 alternative, since the only lands that would be involved that
9 are public lands are the area to the southwest, here, which are
10 already in the corridor.

11 And then the no-action alternative, that we're
12 required by law to analyze, as well, BLM would not approve a
13 right-of-way grant to APS, and the RMP would not be amended.

14 So what is the BLM preferred alternative? We've
15 identified a modified proposed action, within the ACC
16 designation, for the agency-preferred alternative. And it
17 includes best management practices, mitigative measures that
18 are prescribed in the EIS, so as to minimize impacts to visual
19 and other sensitive resources.

20 However, it's BLM's intent that, with this
21 mitigation, we would still allow for the transmission line
22 route to remain within the ACC-certified route.

23 And then, under the preferred alternative, we would
24 amend the Resource Management Plan to do a couple of things.
25 One is to designate a 200-foot-wide single-use utility corridor

1 on public lands, managed by the BLM land -- by the BLM, north
2 of 74.

3 And then, additionally, in addition to the
4 APS-proposed action, the BLM would also designate a multi-use
5 corridor on about a thousand acres of public lands managed by
6 BLM south of 74, that key-shaped parcel.

7 A multi-use corridor would help address future BLM
8 management considerations for the needs of communities in the
9 future on adjacent private lands.

10 We would change the existing visual resource
11 management class designation on over 2,000 acres of public land
12 north of 74 and about a thousand acres south of 74, from a
13 Class 3 to a Class 4, which all that means is that we would
14 have a less-restrictive designation, so as to allow for the
15 newly established utility corridor.

16 In addition, the amendment would allow for BLM to
17 approve a 200-foot-wide right-of-way within the existing
18 utility corridor in the southwest portion, over near the Sun
19 Valley substation.

20 So the -- the rationale for BLM's designating the
21 preferred alternative are a few things. Not an easy -- Not an
22 easy designation, but the rationale takes into considerations
23 comments we heard during the scoping process, from all parties,
24 especially responsive to public input for avoiding
25 environmental and socioeconomic impacts to a majority of the

1 private lands in the project vicinity. It considers community
2 needs for electrical transmission expansion and solidifying the
3 grid, staying, again, within the ACC-certified route.

4 This route, as most of you know, was already the
5 result of a lengthy public process. And remaining within this
6 designated area would allow APS to build the needed power lines
7 more expediently. And this is in line with our Department of
8 the Interior's national policy to encourage electrical
9 transmission.

10 It takes into account existing local community land
11 planning and designations, strives to alleviate potential
12 socioeconomic burdens. Certain members of the Arizona
13 Congressional Delegation have already expressed bipartisan
14 support for the needs of the -- of the local communities and
15 for the ACC designation.

16 BLM's required mitigative measures, again, for APS,
17 would still allow the transmission route to remain within the
18 corridor that ACC had identified.

19 So in the EIS you'll notice that we had proposed
20 mitigation for the project. And it includes minimizing visual
21 impacts through micrositing and selecting the most suitable
22 structures and colors for -- for the power poles. On lands
23 other than the BLM's, the final decision regarding design and
24 infrastructure type would be between the landowner and APS.

25 We also strive to minimize socioeconomic impacts to

1 the majority of the private landowners, as indicated. These
2 measures are really boiled down. And, of course, the EIS
3 elaborates further on them.

4 Regarding recreation, no single-track
5 off-highway-vehicle routes would be used for construction. All
6 OHV access points would be gated and fenced, so as to prevent
7 unauthorized use.

8 Cultural resources. We have historic properties,
9 and they would be marked and avoided and spanned wherever
10 possible, or the right-of-way would be slightly rerouted to
11 avoid properties. The State Historic Preservation Office and
12 the Tribes would be consulted on any historic property that
13 could not be avoided.

14 Special -- Well, species protected by the Arizona
15 Native Plant Law would be relocated, transplanted. And there
16 would be preconstruction surveys for wildlife, and there would
17 be monitoring and mandatory environmental awareness training.

18 There would be no net loss of desert tortoise
19 habitat. The construction area would be surveyed for tortoise
20 prior to ground disturbance. And tortoise awareness training
21 would be required of all construction personnel. Vehicle
22 speeds would not exceed 20 miles an hour in all access routes
23 in the desert tortoise -- for desert tortoise habitat. So the
24 limit would be 20 miles per hour.

25 This concludes my presentation. Thank you.

1 MS. ELLIS: Thank you, Joe, for your presentation.

2 We now have several minutes for the comment portion
3 of today's hearing. This period is your opportunity to provide
4 the BLM with information relative to the EIS analysis and to
5 make statements for the record. This input helps
6 decision-makers to benefit from your knowledge of the local
7 area and your comments on the analysis.

8 So, if you would like to make a comment -- We don't
9 have any comment cards. If you would raise your hand if you
10 would like to make a comment, and then I'll call you forward.
11 If you do come forward to the microphone, please speak very
12 clearly your name, so that we can get it for the court
13 reporter, and who you represent.

14 Is there anybody who would like to make a comment?

15 Okay. Are there any questions?

16 Does everyone need to go do their Christmas
17 shopping?

18 Okay. Well, then this concludes the hearing
19 portion of this meeting. We are going to be staying around, if
20 you want to walk around and look at the boards again. If the
21 BLM-ers could raise their hands.

22 These are the folks that you want to talk to from
23 the BLM if you have any questions. APS is here, as well. And
24 happy holidays, folks.

25 MR. INCARDINE: The cooperating agencies.

1 MS. ELLIS: Oh, the cooperating agencies are here,
2 as well. All right?

3 Oh, and we do have next steps. I'm sorry.

4 After this, there will be the comment period, which
5 ends February 8th. And comments need to be in to the BLM by
6 February 8th.

7 After that will be the FEIS, or the Final EIS, that
8 will come out in the Summer of 2013. And then there will be
9 the decision documents on the EIS and also on the RMPA, and
10 that will be in the Fall of 2013.

11 And, once again, here is more information. And
12 we'll go ahead and break to -- to mill about the room. Thank
13 you, folks.

14 (The public hearing is adjourned at 10:52 a.m.)

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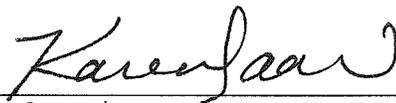
1 CERTIFICATE

2 I, Karen Saari, Certified Reporter for the State of
3 Arizona, certify:

4 That the foregoing public hearing was taken by me;
5 that the proceedings were taken down by me in shorthand and
6 thereafter reduced to print by computer-aided transcription
7 under my direction; that the foregoing pages are a full, true,
8 and accurate transcript of all proceedings had upon the taking
9 of said public hearing, all to the best of my skill and
10 ability.

11 I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am in no way related to nor
12 employed by any parties hereto nor am I in any way interested
13 in the outcome hereof.

14 DATED this 18th day of December, 2012.

15
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17 

18 Karen Saari
19 Certified Reporter No. 50842
20 For the State of Arizona
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