



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Sept. 29, 2015

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BLM Finalizes Environmental Assessment for Xcel Powerline Project over Poncha Pass

MONTE VISTA, Colo. – The Bureau of Land Management San Luis Valley Field Office, in coordination with the San Isabel National Forest Salida Ranger District, has approved and signed a final Environmental Assessment for the Xcel Power Line Rebuild Project over Poncha Pass.

The three transmission lines included in the analysis are nearing the end of their serviceable life and will be rebuilt within or immediately adjacent to their existing locations. Two of the new power lines will increase in voltage from 69-kV to 115-kV, resulting in improved power reliability to the San Luis Valley. The transmission lines cross a variety of public and private lands in portions of Alamosa, Chaffee, Rio Grande and Saguache counties.

The BLM will continue to apply conservation measures to manage and conserve Gunnison Sage-Grouse habitat. The BLM's policy is to manage GUSG seasonal habitats and maintain habitat connectivity to support sustainable GUSG populations and GUSG population objectives as determined in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Colorado Parks and Wildlife. The BLM completed all required consultation under the Endangered Species Act for this project.

The environmental assessment and decision record are available on the BLM San Luis Valley webpage at <http://www.blm.gov/co/st/en/fo/slvfo.html>. Hard copies are available at the following locations: Salida Ranger District, USFS, 5575 Cleora Road, Salida, CO 81201; and the BLM San Luis Valley Field Office, 1313 E. Highway 160, Monte Vista, CO 81144.

The BLM manages more than 245 million acres of public land, the most of any Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The BLM also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's mission is to manage and conserve the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations under our mandate of multiple-use and sustained yield. In Fiscal Year 2014, the BLM generated \$5.2 billion in receipts from public lands.

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