



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
San Luis Valley Field Office
46525 Colorado Highway 114
Saguache, Colorado 8114

June 02, 2014

RE: PUBLIC SCOPING LETTER: Viaero Wireless – Baxter Mountain Communication Site Lease

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this letter is to notify you that the public scoping period under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the proposed Viaero Wireless-Baxter Mountain Communications Site Lease is currently open.

The U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is beginning the process of evaluating an application to issue a Communications Use Lease for the construction and operation of a 150-foot-high telecommunications tower, a 10-foot by 20-foot electronics building, a transmission line extension and connection; and a backup power generator. The telecommunications tower and equipment will be owned and operated by Northeastern Colorado Cellular Inc., doing business as Viaero Wireless (Viaero) on lands administered by the BLM, San Luis Valley Field Office. The proposed location of the tower is on Baxter Mountain located in Rio Grande County, Colorado, adjacent to the town of South Fork (please refer to Figures 1 and 2). The BLM will evaluate Viaero's application and prepare an Environmental Assessment (EA) evaluating the environmental impacts of the proposed action relative to reasonable alternatives. The purpose of the public scoping process is to facilitate determination of the nature and range of issues to be addressed in the EA, including alternatives.

Comments concerning the proposed action, alternatives, and preliminary identification of environmental issues will be accepted from the public; local, state and Federal agencies; Tribes; and other interested parties in order to scope the EA and contribute to the decision-making process. We ask for your input to help us determine the scope and issues to be analyzed in this EA. Additionally, you are invited to a public scoping meeting hosted by the BLM for this EA in an open house format on **Wednesday, June 18, 2014**, between 5:00 and 7:00 pm at:

South Fork Community Building
254 Colorado 149
South Fork, Colorado 81154

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the proposed project is to issue Viaero a Communications Use Lease through a Right-of-Way (ROW) under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA), in order for Viaero to construct and operate a telecommunications site on public lands administered by the BLM. The BLM's purpose is to review the proponent's application, conduct NEPA analysis on the proposed project, and inform the BLM's authorized officer.

The need for the Proposed Action is established by the BLM's responsibility under FLPMA to respond to an application submitted by Viaero for a Communications Use Lease on BLM managed lands.

The BLM will review the proponent's application, conduct an Environmental Analysis on the proposed project and inform the BLM's authorized officer of the Analysis. The BLM will also make a decision regarding issuance of the Communications Use Lease, informed by the Environmental Analysis presented in the EA. Under 43 Code of Federal Regulations 2800, BLM may authorize a Communications Use Lease through a ROW; may authorize a lease with modifications; or may deny such a lease; depending on if a Finding of No Significant Impact is reached.

PROPOSED ACTION

Viaero's goals and objectives consist of the installation of wireless communication infrastructure in the rural, under-served telecommunications area of South Fork. Viaero intends to utilize the proposed telecommunications tower to provide 4th Generation (4G) high-speed wireless broadband services for Global System for Mobile communications-based voice and data to Viaero customers as well as customers of carriers that have partnership agreements with Viaero. The areas served will be along State Highways 160 and 149 in the South Fork area.

Currently, the nearest active telecommunications facility is at Aqua Ramon which is too far away for Viaero to provide adequate in-building coverage in the town limits of South Fork. There are no registered telecommunications towers within five miles of the proposed Baxter Mountain site that Viaero could co-locate with.

The proposed telecommunications site would be located within a portion of the NE1/4 SW1/4 of Section 28, Township 40 North, Range 3 East in Rio Grande County, Colorado. Under the Proposed Action the following would occur:

- 1) Viaero would facilitate the removal of the existing communications tower, which includes abandoned equipment and structures, according to the specifications of BLM and Rio Grande County.
- 2) Viaero would construct and operate a self-supported 150-foot telecommunications tower along with an associated 10-foot by 20-foot electronics equipment building at the new proposed lease site, which is located at an elevation of 8,925 feet on Baxter Mountain. The site would house a fully muffled emergency generator and an aboveground propane tank. The lease site would be a 50-foot by 65-foot area surrounded by a 6-foot high chain link security fence topped with barbed wire. An extension of the existing underground

electric line from the existing water tank to the proposed site would be required. The existing access road to the site would be upgraded on private lands in an existing access easement. This easement terminates at the site where the tower would be located.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

We appreciate your contribution of time and effort, and believe the information you share with us will lead to a better decision. The information will be used to help us prepare the draft EA. Comments should be made in writing and must be received prior to **July 7, 2014** to be considered for inclusion in the public record. If you are unable to attend the public meeting, please send comments by mail to:

Leon Montoya
BLM Project Manager
1803 West Hwy 160
Monte Vista, CO 81144

Email: BLM_CO_SLVPLC_Comments@blm.gov

Please note that comments, including names and street addresses of respondents, will be available for public review at the BLM San Luis Valley Field Office and will be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). They may also be published as part of the EA. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name and/or address from public review or disclosure under the FOIA, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. The BLM will honor such requests to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

Sincerely,

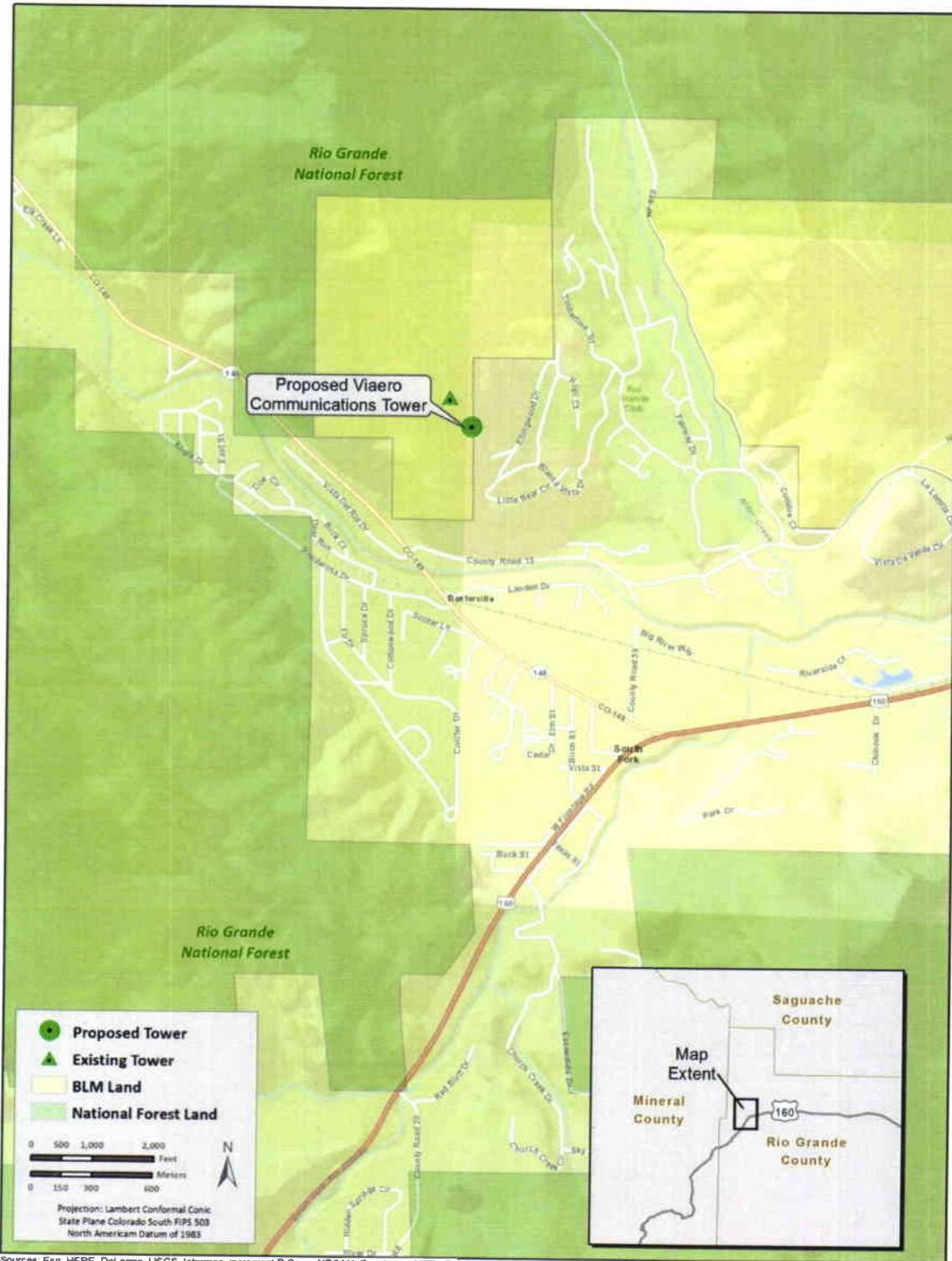


Paul Tigan
Assistant Field Office Manager

Enclosures:

Figure 1 – Project Location Map

Figure 2 – Project Location Aerial



Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, USGS, Intermap, increment P Corp., NRCAN, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), Esri (Thailand), TomTom, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Figure 1 – Project Location Map

