

Opportunity to Comment- Preliminary Environmental Assessment

The Bureau of Land Management, Southwest District Office, and U.S. Forest Service Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre and Gunnison National Forests and San Juan National Forest are seeking comments on the Tri-State Montrose-Nucla-Cahone Transmission Improvement Project Preliminary Environmental Assessment (EA). This EA has been prepared to disclose and analyze the environmental effects of the Tri-State Montrose-Nucla-Cahone Transmission Line Improvement Project proposed by Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, Inc. (Tri-State).

Tri-State submitted an application to the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) for authorizations to rebuild the existing Montrose-Nucla-Cahone 115-kV transmission line to a 230-kV transmission line, and to operate and maintain the new 230-kV transmission line and optical ground wire.

If approved, Tri-State would use primarily wooden H-frame structures which would be approximately 25 feet taller and 10 feet wider than the existing structures. Tri-State proposes to use the existing 115-kV 100-foot right-of-way (ROW) for the rebuild to the greatest extent possible. The new 230-kV transmission line would require an additional 50 foot of ROW clearing for a total of 150 foot- wide ROW. Tri-State would primarily use approximately 241 miles of road, not including state highways, currently used for the existing line. About 67 miles of these roads are down line access located under the existing MNC line. Approximately 6 miles of new access/spur roads would be needed. Tri-State's proposed action also includes upgrades to the existing Cahone and Montrose substations and a new substation near Nucla, Colorado.

The EA analyzes Tri-State's Proposed Action, the No Action Alternative, and three combinations of BLM routing options.

The EA is available at BLM and Forest Service offices in the project area; including the Montrose Public Lands Center at 2465 South Townsend Avenue, Montrose, Colorado 81401; and the Dolores Ranger District/Tres Rios BLM Field Office at 29211 Highway 184, Dolores Colorado, 81323; and online at the project website at <http://blm.gov/dvld>.

Comment periods are being conducted jointly between the BLM and USFS. Submit comments by email to: blm_co_tristatemnc@blm.gov; by mail to: BLM Southwest District, Attn: Gina Jones, 2465 S. Townsend Avenue, Montrose, CO 81401, or by fax: (970) 240-5367. Your comments should include: 1) your name and postal address, 2) the project title (Tri-State Project), 3) specific written comments, and 4) your signature or other verification of identity upon request. Comments received from individual members of an organized group through a clearinghouse or group-generated mail will be considered as the views of the group.

Please be advised that your entire comment, including your personally identifiable information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can request that your personally identifiable information be withheld from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

Each agency will be subject to its respective regulations for BLM appeals (43 CFR Part 4) and USFS pre-decisional objections (36 CFR 218 Subparts A and B). This is the second of two 30-day comment periods during this process that establish standing to appeal or to object. Submitting comments during either of these comment periods will establish standing for BLM appeals and USFS objections.

In order to meet the USFS requirement for objection eligibility on "specific written comments" you must have submitted comments during public scoping (held May 5 through June 4, 2014) or on this draft

analysis. Your comments must be 1) within the scope of the proposed action, 2) have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and 3) must include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider. To establish standing for the USFS 218 objection process, all specific written comments must be postmarked within 30 days from publication of the legal notice in the *Grand Junction Daily Sentinel* and *Durango Herald* or by close of business on **December 3, 2015**, whichever is latest.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Southwest District NEPA Coordinator Gina Jones by phone at 970-240-5381, or by email at gmjones@blm.gov. Additional information about the USFS objection process can be obtained by contacting Liz Mauch by phone at (970) 240-5405 or by email at lmauch@fs.fed.us. The responsible officials are Barbara Sharrow, Southwest District Manager, Acting, and Scott Armentrout, Forest Supervisor, Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests.