



United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Farmington District Office
6251 College Blvd., Suite A
Farmington, New Mexico 87402
www.blm.gov/nm

NMNM 122352
2920 (21240-mr)

Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review and comment is the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) for the proposed San Juan Basin Energy Connect Project (Project). The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) prepared a Draft EIS in consultation with cooperating agencies and in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended; Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ); and the Department of the Interior regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500-1508 for CEQ, 43 CFR part 46 for the BLM); and BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1). This Draft EIS analyzes the effects of authorizing the Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association (Tri-State), the applicant, to construct, operate and maintain a new 230 kV overhead electric transmission line. The BLM Farmington Field Office is the lead for this Project.

Tri-State is requesting a right-of-way grant to authorize use of specific public lands from the Farmington Field Office; Southern Ute Indian Tribe (Southern Ute), Tribal lands from the Southern Ute, Bureau of Indian Affairs; and state lands from the New Mexico State Land Office. Tri-State is also requesting approval from La Plata County, Colorado, for the operation and construction of the transmission line on private properties located in La Plata County.

This Draft EIS analyzes a No Action Alternative and two action alternatives: the Preferred Alternative and the Proposed Action. The action alternatives were developed from a comprehensive process that considered a wide range of electrical system and transmission line route alternatives. The alternatives development process is described in Chapter 2 of Draft EIS and supporting appendices to the Draft EIS.

Both action alternatives are approximately 65 miles long. Both action alternatives would originate from Western's Shiprock Substation and would interconnect to a new 345 kV to 230 kV substation, the Three Rivers Substation. From the new Three Rivers Substation, the transmission lines would extend to a new 230 kV substation, the Kiffen Canyon Substation, located just north of the City of Farmington's existing Glade Tap Substation. The action alternatives would continue northeast and would terminate at the existing Iron Horse Substation near Ignacio, Colorado. The action alternatives also include constructing access roads by building new unpaved roads, improving existing access roads, and using existing roads in their current state. The action alternatives differ in their proposed alignment for the transmission line and the supporting access road network.

The Draft EIS is not a decision document. Its purpose is to inform the public and interested parties of impacts associated with implementing the Tri-State's proposal as associated with granting a right-of-way to construct, operate, and maintain the transmission line and associated facilities across Federal lands. This Draft EIS also provides information to other regulatory agencies for use in their decision-making processes for other permits required for implementation of the Project.

The Draft EIS is now available for public review. To be considered in the Final EIS, written comments on the Draft EIS must be received by 5:00 pm on Monday, April 28, 2014. The BLM will consider timely filed substantive comments and respond to them in the Final EIS. The BLM will host public meetings to discuss the Draft EIS and take comments on the proposed Project and the Draft EIS.

Dates, times and locations of these meetings are as follows:

Tuesday, April 8, 2014
4 pm to 7 pm
Sky Ute Casino
Event Center Room C
14324 US Highway 172 N
Ignacio, CO 81137

Wednesday, April 9, 2014
4 pm to 7 pm
Farmington Civic Center
Exhibition Hall 1
200 W. Arrington Street
Farmington, NM 87401

These locations are also posted on the BLM project website at: <http://www.blm.gov/nm/sjbec>.

Substantive comments received during the 45-day period following publication of the NOA will be considered prior to a decision. Comments on the Draft EIS should be as specific as possible. It is also helpful if the comments refer to chapters, headings, and pages on the Draft EIS. Comments may address the adequacy of specific analyses in the Draft EIS and the merits of the alternatives formulated and discussed in the document (refer to CEQ regulations at 40 CFR 1503.3).

The Draft EIS and supporting documents are available electronically on the BLM project website, and are also available for public review during normal business hours at the following locations:

- Bureau of Land Management, Farmington Field Office, 6251 College Blvd, Farmington, NM 87402
- Farmington Public Library, Adult Services Dept., 2101 Farmington Ave., Farmington, NM 87401
- Aztec Public Library, 319 S. Ash Street, Aztec, NM 87410
- Durango Public Library, 1900 East 3rd Avenue, Durango, CO 81301
- Ignacio Community Library, 470 Goddard Avenue, Ignacio, CO 81137

A limited number of copies of the document will be available, as supplies last. To request a copy, contact Marcy Romero, Project Manager, Farmington Field Office, 6251 College Blvd., Farmington, NM 87402.

Written comments may be submitted by the following methods:

E-Mailbox: blm_nm_ffo_comments@blm.gov

Mail, Courier or Hand Deliver: Bureau of Land Management, Farmington Field Office, re: San Juan Basin Energy Connect Project, 6251 College Blvd., Farmington, NM 87402

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or any other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment, including your personal identifying information, may be made publicly available at any time. While you can request in your comment that your personal identifying information be withheld from public review, the BLM cannot guarantee that it will be able to do so.

If you have any questions regarding the NEPA process used to prepare the Draft EIS or need additional information regarding the Project, please contact Marcy Romero, Project Manager, Bureau of Land Management, Farmington Field Office, 6251 College Blvd., Farmington, NM 87402 or by telephone at (505) 564-7600. Any persons wishing to be added to a mailing list of interested parties may write or call the Project Manager at this address or phone number.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Torres". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Gary Torres
Field Manager