
File Code: 1900
Date: August 2, 2017

Ms. Melissa Pauley
Electricity Policy Analyst
Nogales Interconnection Project EA
Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Ms. Pauley:

Thank you for the invitation to comment on the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Nogales Interconnection Project. We appreciate the opportunity to participate as a Cooperating Agency with the Department of Energy (DOE) in planning for the proposed 230-kV HVDC transmission line adjacent to the Coronado National Forest (CNF).

Based on the information provided in the draft EA, all action alternatives share a common alignment along the eastern boundary of the CNF. However, Alternatives 2 and 4 propose the shortest length of 230-kV HVDC transmission line adjacent to the CNF boundary. Therefore, the CNF would prefer the selection of Alternative 2 or 4 among the alternatives proposed in the draft EA. We recognize that the Preferred Alternative has reduced impacts on CNF resources compared to Alternative 1, which proposes the greatest length of transmission line adjacent to the Forest boundary. The Coronado National Forest ultimately favors a proposal that minimizes impacts to undeveloped natural areas and conforms to the Forest Plan direction of minimizing impacts to wildlife, scenery, recreation and cultural resources.

We appreciate the incorporation of our initial comments on the preliminary draft environmental assessment, submitted by the US Forest Service on February 3, 2017. In addition, the CNF appreciates your acknowledgement of our role as a Cooperating Agency in Section 1.4 of the draft EA. We also noted your inclusion of "Applicant Proposed Measures" in Section 4.6.3 and 4.7.3, which addresses our earlier comments regarding the use of locked gates and signage in response to access concerns, as well as mitigations for visual resource impacts.

If you have any questions, please contact our Environmental Coordinator, Mindi Lehew. Ms. Lehew may be reached via electronic mail at millehew@fs.fed.us or by telephone at 520-388-8352.

Sincerely,


KERWIN S. DEWBERRY
Forest Supervisor

cc: Mindi Lehew; Christine Thiel; James Copeland; Deb Bumpus

