

N. Cheyenne A 3400,  
Lakewood, CO

JUN 9 2000

Ms. Debbie McAller  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Carlsbad Fish and Wildlife Office  
2730 Lokar Avenue West  
Carlsbad, California 92008-6603

Mr. David L. Harlow  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Arizona Ecological Services Field Office  
2321 West Royal Palm Road, Suite 103  
Phoenix, Arizona 85021-4951

Dear Ms. McAller and Mr. Harlow:

The purpose of this correspondence is to inform the Fish and Wildlife Service that Western Area Power Administration (Western) will be lead Federal agency for the proposed Blythe Power Project (Project) located in Riverside County, California, just west of the city of Blythe and to request a list of endangered, threatened, proposed and candidate species and designated or proposed critical habitats. Western has been approached by Wisvest Corporation, a non-regulated subsidiary of Wisconsin Energy Corporation, to interconnect the power to be generated by the Project to Western's electric transmission system. The Project is proposed as a 520-megawatt (MW) natural gas-fired thermal power plant that is intended to serve competitive regional markets in southern California and Arizona. The Project would occupy approximately 15 acres of a 76-acre parcel of private land located just east of the Blythe Airport (see enclosure). Water for cooling and steam generation would be obtained from groundwater wells at approximately 2,200 gallons per minute. The plant would be a "zero discharge" facility, meaning that there would be no wastewater discharge from the plant; wastewater would be handled by evaporation ponds on site. Natural gas would be fed to the plant by new pipelines that would tap existing major interstate gas pipelines in the vicinity. One option is to pipe gas from the Arizona side of the Colorado River through a new 11.5 miles of new pipeline. This option would require the construction of approximately 11.5 mile pipeline that would bore under the Colorado River and the surface irrigation canals and drains. The other option is to tap an existing pipeline within one mile of the Project; this would result in the need for approximately one-half mile of new pipeline.

The Project would interconnect with Western's transmission system by means of a reconfiguration of two 161-kilovolt (kV) transmission lines that terminate in Western's Blythe Substation, located approximately 600 feet east of the Project site. These two lines, the Parker-Blythe #1 and #2 transmission lines, as well as Western's Blythe-Knob 161-kV line, a line belonging to the Imperial Irrigation district, and a line belonging to Southern California Edison Company, all interconnect at the Blyth Substation. New transmission construction would be limited to short tie sections to each of Western's two lines; these tie sections would generally involve one or two spans of new construction at most.

Western is conducting an Environmental Assessment (EA) of the project in accordance with the Department of Energy's implementing procedures for the National Environmental policy Act. Western is conducting this analysis jointly with the California Energy Commission's (CEC) project siting review. The timeline for completion of this review has not yet been set, however Western anticipates that our Draft EA will coincide with the release of the CEC Preliminary Staff Assessment, which is tentatively set for the first part of September. Our final EA will coincide with the Final Staff Assessment, tentatively set for the end of October. Western would want to complete the formal Section 7 consultation prior to the issuance of the Final EA.

Since this project is primarily in California, but does cross the Colorado River into Arizona, your offices have dual jurisdiction. Mr. George Perkins of this office has contacted Leslie Fitzpatrick of the Phoenix Office and Debbie McAller of the Carlsbad Office informally, and it was his feeling that the Arizona office would be willing to defer to the Carlsbad office for decision making. Western would appreciate your consideration of a request to have a single office review our consultation. Western will keep both offices informed of project status regardless.

Mr. Nick Chevance (720-962-7254; chevance@wapa.gov) has been designated as the Environmental Project manager for this project and can provide you with further information. You can also contact myself (602-352-2592; holt@wapa.gov) or Mr. Perkins (602-352-2536; gperkins@wapa.gov). Western looks forward to working with you on this project.

Sincerely,

Signed .

 John Holt  
Environmental Manager

Enclosure (tour map)

bcc:

N. Chevance A3400, Lakewood, CO.

GPerkins:ki:06/01/00:D

ki:06/05/00:F

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Proposed Plant Location

Proposed Gas Pipelines

