

DETERMINATION TO PREPARE AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Name of Project: Crossman Peak Communications Facility

Location: East of Lake Havasu City, Mohave County, Arizona

Description of the Proposed Action: Western Area Power Administration, Desert Southwest Region (Western) proposes to own, construct, operate, maintain and, if needed, decommission a new communication facility located adjacent to a privately owned one situated near Crossman Peak, east of Lake Havasu City in Mohave County, Arizona. The design, operation, and maintenance of this facility must meet North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and Western Electric Coordination Council (WECC) reliability standards as well as follow the guidance in Western's Power System Safety Manual. Western shares its communication network with the Bureau of Reclamation, which generates electricity at its dams, and other electrical utilities.

The proposed action consists of three components: a communication facility, an access road, and an electrical service distribution line. Western plans to acquire private land and construct facility composed of a 100-foot-tall, self-supporting tower with attachments such as microwave dishes, a prefabricated equipment shelter, a backup generator, a propane tank, and associated concrete slab foundations. Western plans use an existing dirt access road across land managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Lake Havasu Field Office and private land; Western would widen the road's switchback turns situated on private land for safety. Western plans to contract with a local utility to provide electrical service to the facility. This would entail constructing an approximately eight-mile-long, wood pole distribution line across private and BLM land. Table 1 shows which entity is responsible for each component and phase.

Phase/ Component	Own	Construct or Improve	Operate	Maintain	Decommission
Communication Facility	Western	Western	Western	Western	Western
Access Road	BLM & Private	Western*	Western, BLM & Private	Western & private	BLM & private
Distribution Line	Local utility**	Local utility***	Local utility	Local utility	Local utility
*Western would improve a portion of the road located on private land.					
**BLM would issue the local utility a right-of-way.					
***Western would pay the local utility to cover construction costs.					

The proposed communication facility is located in Section 13 in Township 14 North, Range 19 West on the Gila and Salt River Baseline and Meridian (GSRBM). The existing access road crosses portions of Sections 13, 14, 15, 21, 22, 28 and 29 in Township 14 North, Range 19 West on the GSRBM. A route for the distribution line has not yet been identified.

A new communication facility is needed, because Western plans to replace existing microwave equipment operating in the 2320-2345 megahertz (MHz) band with new ones operating in the 7125-8025 megahertz MHz band. Studies show that the new band is interrupted by terrain

between two existing Western facilities that comprise our microwave system's backbone (Metal Mountain Site located to the south near Parker Dam in San Bernardino County, California and Christmas Tree Pass Site situated to the north near Davis Dam in Clark County, Nevada). A new facility near Crossman Peak would provide a clear path in this band via our existing Topock communication facility (Figure 1). Western is upgrading to the 7125-8025 MHz band to meet the President's goal of making 500 MHz of spectrum available for licensed commercial use (see 75 FR 3837, 7/1/2010). The new equipment would also increase our bandwidth. Western operates a redundant communication network to maintain the safety and reliability of the bulk electric system.

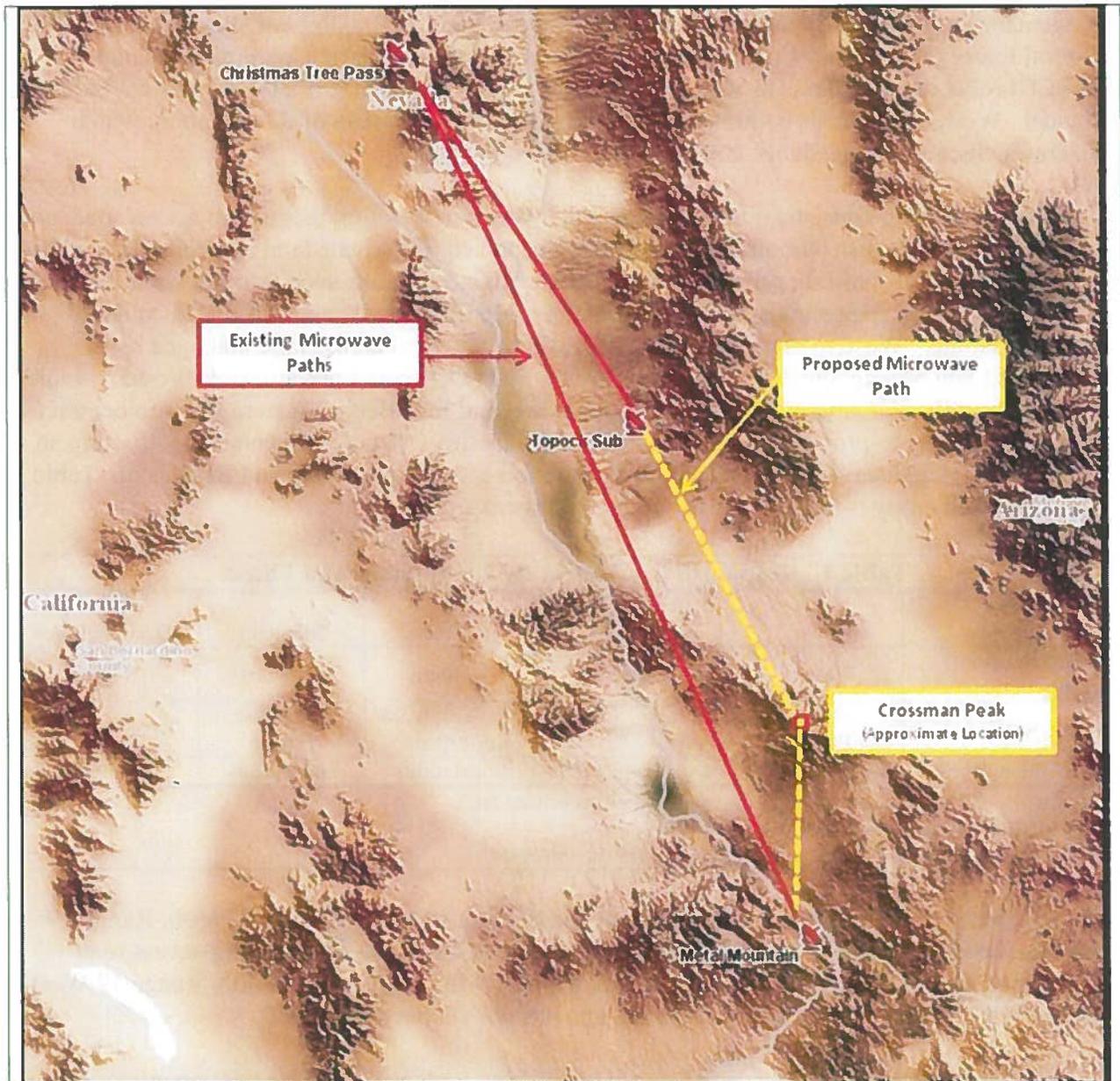


Figure 1. Existing and Proposed Microwave Paths.

Western's construction contractor and maintenance crews would use the following equipment during the proposed action: all-terrain vehicle, auger or drill rig, backhoe, bucket or boom truck, bulldozer, cement mixer, crane, crew truck, dump truck, front-end loader, and grader. A helicopter would also be used due to the remoteness of the work area and the steepness of the existing access road.

Western prepared a conceptual schedule for this action as part of its ten-year planning process. Design would begin in February 2016, and construction would start in December 2016. Western estimates that construction would take seven months. Western plans to place the communications facility in service by March 2018.

Western's action, per 10 CFR 1021.104, consists of 1) constructing, operating, maintaining and decommissioning a new communication facility; 2) using, improving and maintaining an existing access road as needed to reach the new communications facility; and 3) funding the construction of a distribution line to provide power to the new communication facility.

Class of Action from Department of Energy (DOE) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Regulations: While Western's proposed action fits Categorical Exclusion B1.19 titled "Microwave, meteorological and radio towers," BLM determined their action, responding to right-of-way applications, does not fit one of their categorical exclusions. BLM determined that they need an Environmental Assessment (EA) to support their decisions associated with Western's proposed action (BLM to Western, letter, 8/18/2015). DOE's NEPA regulations state that "DOE may prepare an EA on any action at any time in order to assist agency planning and decisionmaking" (Section 1021.321). Western and BLM agreed that Western will be the lead federal agency and BLM will be a cooperating agency.

Determination: Based on Section 1021.300 in the DOE NEPA Implementing Procedures, I determine that Western will prepare an EA to assess the impacts of the proposed action. Based on the analysis in the EA, Western will either prepare a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and proceed with the action, or prepare an Environmental Impact Statement if the EA reveals the potential for significant environmental impacts.



Ronald E. Moulton
Senior Vice President and Regional Manager
Desert Southwest Region

11/2/15
Date

