



Department of Energy
Western Area Power Administration
Desert Southwest Customer Service Region
P.O. Box 6457
Phoenix, AZ 85005-6457

January 16, 2013

SUBJECT: Scoping Letter for Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement and Notice of Floodplain and Wetland Action for Western's Gila-North Gila Transmission Line Re-build Project in Conjunction with APS's North Gila-TS8 Construction Project (DOE/EA-1948)

Dear Interested Party:

This letter invites you to be involved in and provide input on environmental issues associated with the above-mentioned Federal action, which is further described below.

Western Area Power Administration (Western) is a Federal power-marketing agency within the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) that operates and maintains transmission lines and associated facilities. Western proposes to re-build and upgrade two, parallel 4.8 mile-long transmission lines located between the existing Gila and North Gila substations and take land actions in support of portions of APS's construction of a new, 12.8-mile-long, 230-kV transmission line between North Gila and a proposed TS8 substation east of Yuma in Yuma County, Arizona (see enclosed map). Western's reconstruction action involves a portion of its wood-pole Gila-Knob 161-kV transmission line, which will be upgraded to 230-kV and re-built on steel structures, as well as the wood-pole, double-circuited, Gila-North Gila 69-kV transmission line, which would be re-built as an underbuild on steel structures associated with APS's new North Gila-TS8 230-kV transmission line. Western's land action entails acquiring up to an additional 50 feet adjacent to (west of) the existing Gila-Knob transmission line right-of-way (ROW), transferring a portion of the Gila-North Gila transmission line ROW to APS, and granting APS the right for their new transmission line to cross Western's Gila Substation.

Western proposes this project to increase the reliability and safety of the bulk electric system by replacing wood structures with steel ones, moving away from the 161-kV standard which is no longer commonly used, and efficiently using existing transmission line ROW. The Gila-Knob transmission line was built in 1943 and has been in service well beyond its useful life.

As part of the project planning tasks, Western will address the following issues before construction can begin:

- **Cultural Resources:** Western will ensure that an intensive pedestrian (Class III) survey of the project area has been conducted. Western will serve as Lead to consult with the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office, Tribes, and consulting parties regarding this project.
- **Biological Resources:** Western will ensure that a biological survey of the project is conducted. The biological survey will evaluate threatened, endangered and other special status species and their habitat potentially affected by the project.

- **Floodplains and Wetlands Review:** Western will assess impacts to floodplains and wetlands and comply with the applicable requirements of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Clean Water Act section 404 requirements.
- **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA):** Western will serve as Lead Federal Agency in the preparation of an environmental assessment (EA) for this project unless, 1) a cooperating agency objects, or 2) if a significant impact that cannot be mitigated is identified. In these cases, Western may prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. APS's North Gila-TS8 Transmission Line Project will be analyzed as a connected action.

We anticipate project-related construction activities could begin in January 2015, provided the above-mentioned tasks are completed and no significant environmental effects are identified. Project information is available online:

<http://www.wapa.gov/dsw/environment/GilaToNorthGilaRebuild.htm>.

We would like to know of any issues, concerns and suggestions you may have regarding the project. Your comments will help define issues and alternatives for consideration in the environmental review process. Comments can be provided in writing, by phone, or in person at the public scoping meeting (information below). Please submit your comments by February 21, 2013.

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Western will host a public open house to allow the public and interested parties an opportunity to learn about the project, the NEPA process, and ask questions. The meeting will be held at the following date, time and location.

Thursday, February 7, 2013, 6:00–8:00 pm
Pivot Point Conference Center/Hilton Garden Inn
310 N. Madison Avenue
Yuma, AZ 85364

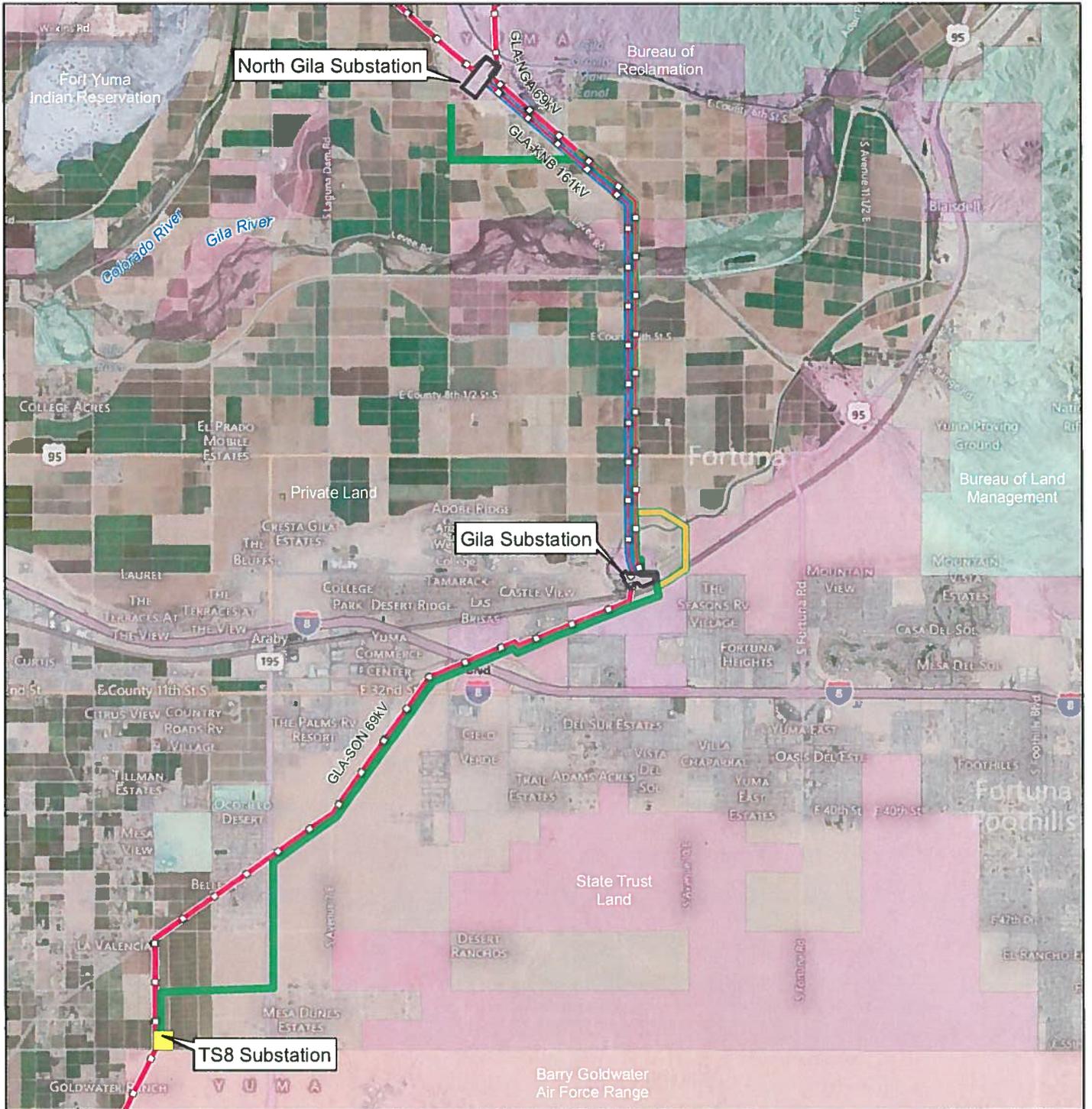
We look forward to receiving your comments on this project and hope that you will be able to attend the public scoping meeting.

Sincerely,



Linda Marianito, Environmental Manager

Enclosure (map)

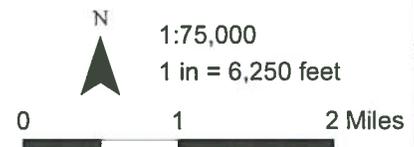


- TS8 Substation
- Existing Substation
- Existing Western Transmission Line
- Proposed Action**
- Gila-Knob Upgrade to 230kV
- Gila-North Gila 69kV Underbuild on North Gila-TS8 230kV Structures
- APS North Gila-TS8 Project (Connected Action)

- Alternative 1***
- Certified Route
- Land Ownership**
- Barry Goldwater Air Force Range
- Bureau of Land Management
- Bureau of Reclamation
- Fort Yuma Indian Reservation
- Private Land
- State Trust Land

Gila to North Gila Transmission Line Rebuild and Upgrade Project

DOE / EA - 1948



Source: DSW, Aspen EG, ESRI

* Alternative 1 includes Proposed Action components except Certified Route