

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

SUBJECT: Scoping Letter for an Environmental Assessment, Historic Properties Review, and Notice of Floodplain and Wetland Action for WAPA's Parker-Blythe #2 Transmission Line Rebuild Project, San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, California (DOE/EA-2168)

Dear Interested Party:

Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) seeks your participation and involvement in establishing the scope of environmental issues and studies associated with the Parker-Blythe #2 (PAD-BLY#2) Transmission Line Rebuild Project in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties, California.

Proposed Action

WAPA is a federal power-marketing agency within the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) that operates and maintains transmission lines and associated facilities in accordance with the Federal Power Act Sections 210 to 213, and its Open Access Transmission Service Tariff (OATT). WAPA's OATT is filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

The PAD-BLY#2 transmission line extends for approximately 63.9 miles between the Parker Dam Upper 161-kV Switchyard in unincorporated San Bernardino County, California to the north; and the Blythe Substation in the City of Blythe in Riverside County, California to the south (see attached Project Location Map).

WAPA proposes to reconstruct the PAD-BLY#2 transmission line within its existing 100-foot-wide right-of-way (ROW) to improve overall system reliability and safety and to better meet future transmission needs. The existing 161-kilovolt (kv) PAD-BLY#2 transmission line is part of the Parker-Davis transmission system. The transmission line was built in 1969 with wood pole H-frame structures. Structures along the line are degraded, and some are no longer compliant with FERC standards.

The Proposed Action consists of the following:

- Replace all 523 wood H-frame structures with new in-kind structures.
- Add wood dead end structures as required.
- Reuse existing conductors.
- Replace existing static neutral cable with optical ground wire (OPGW) in the same location on the poles.
- Improve existing access roads to prepare them for construction staging and access.

The majority of the PAD-BLY#2 ROW occurs on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land. Approximately 8 miles of the ROW occurs on the Colorado River Indian Reservation. Portions of the ROW are privately owned near the unincorporated community of Parker Dam and the City of Blythe. WAPA invited BLM and the Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) to participate as cooperating agencies on the Project.

The Project Area also includes up to 70 miles of existing unpaved access roads; laydown yards to store poles and equipment; and 14 conductor pull locations, each covering 80,000 square feet (approximately 100 feet wide by 800 feet long) to stage heavy equipment that would pull the electrical line taut during construction.

We anticipate that construction could begin as soon as Spring of 2023. This start date depends on the completion of planning efforts described below and assumes no significant environmental impacts are identified.

Further information is available online at:

<https://www.wapa.gov/regions/DSW/Environment/Pages/PAD-BLY2-Rebuild.aspx>

Environmental Planning Process

WAPA will address the following planning requirements and seeks your input:

- **Clean Water Act & Executive Order 11988 Floodplain Management:** WAPA will assess the Proposed Action's impacts, if any, to waters of the U.S., floodplains, and wetlands and comply with the requirements of applicable U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Section 404 permits. We seek your input about floodplains located near the Project Area and ways to avoid or minimize impacts.
- **Endangered Species Act:** WAPA will serve as lead Federal agency and will evaluate threatened, endangered, and other special status species and their habitat that could be affected by the Proposed Action and consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as needed. WAPA will conduct a biological review of areas impacted. We seek your observations about the occurrence of protected species near the Project Area and suggestions on ways to avoid or minimize adverse effects.
- **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA):** WAPA will serve as lead Federal agency in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment of the Proposed Action and its impacts. We seek your comments about alternatives and environmental issues that you would like to see presented in the Draft Environmental Assessment.
- **National Historic Preservation Act:** WAPA will serve as lead Federal agency for section 106 consultations with the California State Historic Preservation Officer, Indian tribes, and consulting parties for the Proposed Action. WAPA seeks your suggestions about the available sources of cultural resource information and applicable types of identification efforts.

Get Involved

We would like to know of any issues, concerns, and suggestions you may have regarding the Proposed Action. Your comments will help define issues and alternatives for consideration in the environmental review process mentioned above. Comments can be provided in writing or by phone at the contact listed below. Comments can also be submitted at the virtual public scoping meeting.

Mail: Western Area Power Administration, Desert Southwest Region
ATTN: Matthew Pollock, NEPA Document Manager
PO Box 6457
Phoenix, AZ 85005
Email: mpollock@wapa.gov
Phone: (480) 440-9767

WAPA prefers to receive your scoping comments by February 9, 2022, or have comments post-marked by this date. WAPA will consider late comments to the extent practicable.

Attend the Virtual Public Scoping Meeting

WAPA will host a virtual public scoping meeting to give you an opportunity to ask questions, learn about the Proposed Action and the environmental planning process, and submit comments. The meeting will be held on:

Thursday, January 27th, 2022, at 5:00-7:00 PM

Zoom Webinar: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88156777337>
Webinar ID: 881 5677 7337

Should you not have access to a computer, please use the call-in number to participate in the Zoom Webinar via phone:

By Phone: +1 (669) 900-6833
Webinar ID: 881 5677 7337

Hardcopies of Scoping Meeting Materials will be available at:

Parker Public Library
1001 S. Navajo Ave.
Parker, AZ 85344
Phone: (928) 669-2622
Hours: Mon.-Thu. 10 AM-7 PM
Sat. 8AM-12 PM
Closed Fri./Sun.

Palo Verde Valley District Library
125 W. Chanslor Way
Blythe, CA 9225
Phone: (760) 922-5371
Hours: Mon.-Fri. 9 AM-4:30 PM
Closed Sat.-Sun.

You can also email Matthew Pollock at mpollock@wapa.gov to request hardcopies of the Scoping Meeting Materials. WAPA will mail you all Scoping Meeting Materials in an expeditious manner.

Next Steps

We intend to use your comments to prepare a Draft Environmental Assessment, which we expect to complete by June 2022. We will then seek public comment on this document.

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

Sincerely,

Natalie N. Ortega

Natalie Ortega
Environmental Manager

Enclosure (Project Location Map)

Attachment 1: Project Location Map

