DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY
Bonneville Power Administration
Hot Springs to Anaconda Transmission Line Rebuild Project

AGENCY: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), Department of Energy (DOE). ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and notice of floodplain and wetland assessment.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), BPA intends to prepare an EIS on its proposed rebuild of approximately 120 miles of existing 230-kilovolt (kV) wood-pole transmission line that runs through Sanders, Lake, Missoula, Granite, Powell, and Deer Lodge counties, Montana. The deteriorated condition of the more than 60-year-old line compromises BPA’s ability to maintain reliable electric service, and poses a safety risk to the public and maintenance crews.

With this notice, BPA is initiating the public scoping process for the EIS and is requesting comments about the potential environmental impacts it should consider as it prepares the EIS for the proposed project. In accordance with DOE regulations for compliance with floodplain and wetland environmental review requirements, BPA will prepare a floodplain and wetlands assessment that identifies, evaluates, and as appropriate, implements actions to avoid or minimize potential harm to or within any affected floodplains and wetlands. The assessment will be included in the EIS.

DATES: Written comments are due to the address below by August 12, 2014. Comments may also be made at three EIS scoping meetings to be held on the 29th, 30th, and 31st of July, 2014 at the addresses below.

ADDRESS: Comments and suggestions on the proposed scope of the Draft EIS for this project and requests to be placed on the project mailing list may be mailed by letter to Bonneville Power Administration, Public Affairs—DKC–7, P.O. Box 14428, Portland, OR 97292–4428. Or you may FAX them to 503–230–3285; submit them on-line at www.bpa.gov/comment; or email them to comment@bpa.gov. Scoping meetings will be held in Montana from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the following locations: July 29, 2014 at the Missoula Fire Department, Station 4, 3011 Latimer Street, Missoula; on July 30, 2014 at the Dixon Senior Citizens Center, 106 3rd Street, Dixon; and on July 31, 2014 at the William K. Kohrs Memorial Library, 501 Missouri Avenue, Deer Lodge. At these informal, open-house meetings, BPA will provide project information and maps. Members of the project team will be available to answer questions and accept verbal and written comments.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Doug Corkran, Environmental Coordinator, Bonneville Power Administration—KFC–4, P.O. Box 3621, Portland, Oregon, 97208–3621; toll-free telephone number 1–800–622–4519; direct number 503–230–7646; fax number 503–230–5699; or email at djcorkran@bpa.gov. You may also contact Chad Hamel, Project Manager, Bonneville Power Administration—TEP–TPP–1, P.O. Box 3621, Portland, Oregon, 97208–3621; toll-free telephone 1–800–622–4519; direct telephone 360–619–6557; or email cjhamele@bpa.gov. Additional information can be found at the project Web site: www.bpa.gov/goto/HotSpringsAnaconda.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: BPA proposes to rebuild three existing wood-pole transmission lines—the Hot Springs-Rattlesnake, Rattlesnake-Garrison, and Garrison-Anaconda lines—that run consecutively from Hot Springs, Montana to Anaconda, Montana. No major work has been done on the lines since they were built in 1952. Many of the structures, the electric wire (conductor), and associated structural components (cross arms, insulators, and dampers) are physically worn and structurally unsound in places. The wood transmission poles have lasted beyond the expected 55 to 60 years and now need to be replaced due to age, rot, and deterioration. Rebuilding the deteriorated line would maintain reliable electrical service and avoid risks to the safety of the public and maintenance crews.

The project would include removing and replacing existing wood-pole structures and components, as well as the conductor; improving access roads and establishing temporary access where needed; removing trees adjacent to the line that may cause a threat to reliability; developing temporary staging areas for storage of project materials; and revegetating areas disturbed by construction activities. The existing structures would be replaced with structures of similar design within or near to their existing locations. The line would continue to operate at 230 kV.

Proposed activities would also include the installation of new line disconnect switches at the Hot Springs and Garrison substations, and upgrading the existing fiber optic line that is attached to the Hot Springs-Rattlesnake and Rattlesnake-Garrison transmission line structures.

Alternatives Proposed for Consideration: In addition to the Proposed Action, BPA will evaluate the No Action Alternative as well as any additional viable alternatives brought forward during the scoping process. Under the No Action Alternative, BPA would not rebuild the line and would make repairs on an as-needed or emergency basis.

Public Participation and Identification of Environmental Issues: The potential environmental issues identified for most transmission line projects include land use, cultural resources, visual impacts, sensitive plants and animals, erosion/soils, wetlands, floodplains, and fish and water resources. The existing lines cross about 50 miles of the Flathead Indian Reservation, small portions of the Lolo and Beaverhead-Deer Lodge National Forests, several miles of State land, as well as private land.

BPA has established a 30-day scoping period during which affected landowners, concerned citizens, special interest groups, local governments, and any other interested parties are invited to comment on the scope of the proposed EIS. Scoping will help BPA ensure that a full range of issues related to this proposal is addressed in the EIS, and also help identify significant or potentially significant impacts that may result from the proposed project. When completed, the Draft EIS will be circulated for review and comment, and BPA will hold at least one public comment meeting for the Draft EIS. BPA will consider and respond in the Final EIS to comments received on the Draft EIS. BPA’s subsequent decision will be documented in a Record of Decision.
Take notice that on June 23, 2014, Transco Gas Pipe Line Company LLC (Transco), 2800 Post Oak Boulevard, Houston, Texas 77056, filed in the above referenced docket an application pursuant to section 7(c) of the Natural Gas Act (NGA), and Part 157 of the Commission’s regulations requesting authorization to construct and operate the Rock Springs Expansion Project (Project), all as more fully set forth in the application which is on file with the Commission and open to public inspection. The filing is available for review at the Commission in the Public Reference Room or may be viewed on the Commission’s Web site web at http://www.ferc.gov using the “eLibrary” link. Enter the docket number excluding the last three digits in the docket number field to access the document. For assistance, contact FERC at FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov or call toll-free, (886) 208-3676 or TTY, (202) 502-8659.

Any questions concerning this application may be directed to Bill Hammons, P.O. Box 1396, Houston, Texas 77251, by telephone at (713) 215–2130.

Specifically, the Project consists of approximately 11.17 miles, 20-inch diameter pipeline lateral, a 4,000 horsepower compression station, and appurtenant facilities in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania and Cecil County, Maryland. Transco has executed a binding precedent agreement with ODEC for 100% of the capacity. The Project will enable Transco to provide 192 million cubic feet per day of incremental firm transportation capacity from Transco’s Station 210 Zone 6 Pool in Mercer County, New Jersey to Old Dominion Electric Cooperative’s (ODEC) proposed Wildcat Point Generating Facility in Cecil County, Maryland. Transco proposes that the firm transportation service will be rendered pursuant to Rate Schedule FT of Transco’s FERC Gas Tariff and Transco’s blanket certificate under Part 284 (G) of the Commission’s regulations. The approximate cost for the Project is $79,476,150.

On October 16, 2013, the Commission staff granted Transco’s request to utilize the Pre-Filing Process and assigned Docket No. PF14–3–000 to staff activities involved in the Project. Now, as of the filing of the June 23, 2014 application, the Pre-Filing Process for this project has ended. From this time forward, this proceeding will be conducted in Docket No. CP14–504–000, as noted in the caption of this Notice.

Pursuant to section 157.9 of the Commission’s rules (18 CFR 157.9), within 90 days of this Notice, the Commission staff will either: Complete its environmental assessment (EA) and place it into the Commission’s public record (eLibrary) for this proceeding; or issue a Notice of Schedule for Environmental Review. If a Notice of Schedule for Environmental Review is issued, it will indicate, among other milestones, the anticipated date for the Commission staff’s issuance of the final environmental impact statement (FEIS) or EA for this proposal. The filing of the EA in the Commission’s public record for this proceeding or the issuance of a Notice of Schedule for Environmental Review will serve to notify federal and state agencies of the timing for the completion of all necessary reviews, and the subsequent need to complete all federal authorizations within 90 days of the date of issuance of the Commission staff’s FEIS or EA.

There are two ways to become involved in the Commission’s review of this project. First, any person wishing to obtain legal status by becoming a party to the proceedings for this project should, on or before the comment date stated below file with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street NE., Washington, DC 20426, a motion to intervene in accordance with the requirements of the Commission’s Rules of Practice and Procedure (18 CFR 385.214 or 385.211) and the Regulations under the NGA (18 CFR 157.10). A person obtaining party status will be placed on the service list maintained by the Secretary of the Commission and will receive copies of all documents filed by the applicant and by all other parties. A party must submit seven copies of filings made in the proceeding with the Commission and must mail a copy to the applicant and to every other party. Only parties to the proceeding can ask for court review of Commission orders in the proceeding. However, a person does not have to intervene in order to have comments considered. The second way to participate is by filing with the Secretary of the Commission, as soon as possible, an original and two copies of comments in support of or in opposition to this project. The Commission will consider these comments in determining the appropriate action to be taken, but the filing of a comment alone will not serve to make the filer a party to the proceeding. The Commission’s rules require that persons filing comments in opposition to the project provide copies of their protests only to the party or parties directly involved in the protest.

Persons who wish to comment only on the environmental review of this project should submit an original and two copies of their comments to the Secretary of the Commission. Environmental commentors will be placed on the Commission’s environmental mailing list, will receive copies of the environmental documents, and will be notified of meetings associated with the Commission’s environmental review process. Environmental commentors will not be required to serve copies of filed documents on all other parties. However, the non-party commentors will not receive copies of all documents filed by other parties or issued by the Commission (except for the mailing of environmental documents issued by the Commission) and will not have the right to seek court review of the Commission’s final order.

The Commission strongly encourages electronic filings of comments, protests and interventions in lieu of paper using the “eFiling” link at http://www.ferc.gov. Persons unable to file electronically should submit an original and 7 copies of the protest or intervention to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, 888 First Street NE., Washington, DC 20426. Comment Date: 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on July 24, 2014.

Dated: July 3, 2014.

Kimberly D. Bose,
Secretary.