

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

for

**CENTRAL POWER ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
and
MOUNTRAIL-WILLIAMS ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE
SNAKE CREEK to PARSHALL 115-kV TRANSMISSION PROJECT**

**ENGINEERING AND ENVIRONMENTAL STAFF
RURAL UTILITIES SERVICE**

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Background

Central Power Electric Cooperative (CPEC) and Mountrail-Williams Electric Cooperative (MVEC) are seeking financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Utilities Service for their proposed 115-kilovolt (kV) overhead transmission line. The transmission line would replace 60.5 miles of existing distribution and transmission lines with a 115-kV transmission line and it would also construct an additional 7.5 miles of new 115-kV transmission line where there are no existing electric utility lines (Project). The proposed Project would begin at the Department of Energy, Western Area Power Administration's (Western's) Garrison-Snake Creek Substation and extend north and west to a delivery point at MVEC's existing Parshall Substation located northwest of Parshall, ND. The proposed Project would span McLean, Ward, and Mountrail Counties, North Dakota

Western has identified the proposed Project as one of the system additions in the Western/Basin/Heartland Integrated System (IS) that is needed to meet the increased power requirements from unexpected network load growth due to increasing oil development in eastern Montana and North Dakota. The proposed Project will help maintain system reliability and customer load-serving capability.

RUS financing of this proposed Project would make it a Federal action subject to review under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500-1508), and RUS's "Environmental Policies and Procedures" (7 CFR part 794). RUS, in coordination with MVEC, CPEC, and their consultants, prepared an environmental assessment (EA) in accordance with NEPA, its implementing regulations, and other applicable environmental laws, regulations, and policies. The EA analyzed the potential impacts of the construction and operation of the proposed Project on the human environment.

Description of Proposed Project

The proposed Project would construct 60.5 miles of overhead transmission line within existing electric utility right-of-way (ROW) and 7.5 miles of overhead transmission line within new ROW. The existing utility corridor is a combination of overhead transmission and distribution lines with pole heights ranging from 50 to 61 feet. The proposed Project would bury 7 miles of existing distribution line and replace all other existing lines with 115-kV transmission line on poles ranging between 55 and 95 feet high.

The line would be primarily constructed on single wood-pole structures with some H-frame wood-pole structures and one to three wood poles at minor angle structure locations. Steel monopoles on concrete foundations would be used at major angle or dead-end structure locations. Specific information on the facilities to be constructed is provided in the EA.

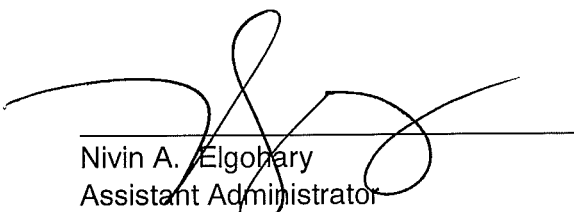
RUS NEPA Process

CPEC and MWEC submitted an environmental analysis to RUS which addressed the potential environmental impact of the proposed Project. RUS conducted an independent evaluation of the environmental analysis and coordinated with CPEC and MWEC in the development of an EA for the proposed Project. CPEC, MWEC, and RUS initially considered the alternatives of no action, alternative routes for the transmission line, alternative methods of delivery such as burying the line underground, and alternative design and construction methods. Ultimately, two alternatives were considered to be reasonable and feasible and they were carried forward for detailed analysis – the No Action Alternative and the Proposed Action to construct the proposed Project. Under the No Action Alternative, RUS would not provide financing for the proposed facilities. Under the Proposed Action, the proposed Project would be constructed as described above.

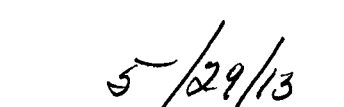
RUS made the EA available for public review and comment for 30 days. The availability of the EA for public review was announced in the Minot (North Dakota) Daily News on March 14, 15, and 16, 2013, and in the McLean County (North Dakota) Independent on March 14 and 21, 2013. The EA was available for viewing on Central Power's website or as a hardcopy by request to RUS. RUS did not receive any comments during the 30-day public comment period.

Based on analysis provided in the EA, RUS has concluded that the construction and operation of the proposed Project would have no significant impact to land use, vegetation, special status species including federally listed threatened or endangered species, water quality, air quality, social or economic concerns, human health and safety, floodplains, wetlands, prime or unique farmland, or historic properties. The proposed Project would not have a disproportionate adverse environmental or human health impacts to minority or low-income populations.

No other potentially significant impacts resulting from the proposed Project have been identified. Therefore, RUS has determined that this finding of no significant impact fulfills its obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*), the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (40 CFR parts 1500-1508), and RUS' Environmental Policies and Procedures (7 CFR part 1794) for its action related to the proposed Project. Because RUS' federal action would not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment, it will not prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for its action related to the proposal.



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Date

