

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

[FE Docket No. PP-197, DOE/EIS-0307]

Notice of Reopening Scoping Period and Schedule for Public Scoping Meetings; Public Service Company of New Mexico

AGENCY: Department of Energy (DOE).

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: DOE announces that it is reopening the scoping period and will hold additional public scoping meetings for the environmental impact statement (DOE/EIS-0307) that is being prepared in connection with an application for a Presidential permit filed by Public Service Company of New Mexico (PNM). An EIS is being prepared because DOE has determined that the issuance of the Presidential permit would constitute a major Federal action that may have a significant impact upon the environment within the meaning of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA). PNM has applied for a Presidential permit to construct electric transmission lines across the U.S.-Mexican border. The previous public scoping period extended from February 12, 1999, to April 14, 1999, during which time DOE conducted seven public meetings to obtain comments on the three alternative transmission corridors that were proposed in PNM's Presidential permit application. The purpose of this notice is to open a new scoping period to obtain additional comments, particularly on three additional alternative transmission corridors that have been identified subsequent to the original scoping period.

DATES: DOE invites interested agencies, organizations, and members of the public to submit comments or suggestions to assist in identifying significant environmental issues and in determining the appropriate scope of the EIS. The second scoping period starts with the publication of this notice in the **Federal Register** and will continue until July 14, 1999. Written and oral comments will be given equal weight, and DOE will consider all comments received or postmarked by July 14, 1999, in defining the scope of the EIS. Comments received or postmarked after that date will be considered to the extent possible. Additional information on the scoping process is available in the scoping notice published in the **Federal Register** on February 12, 1999 (64 FR 17173).

Dates, times, and locations for the public scoping meetings are:

1. June 29, 1999, 1 to 3 P.M., Desert Hills Social Center, 2980 S. Camino del Sol, Green Valley, Arizona.

2. June 29, 1999, 6 to 8 P.M., St. Ann's Hall, 18 Baca, Tubac, Arizona.

3. June 30, 1999, 10 to 12 P.M., Meeting Room, Buenos Aries National Wildlife Refuge, Sasabe, Arizona. (Directions: From Tucson, take I-19 S to Ajo Way/Highway 86, go W on Ajo Way 20 miles to Three Points/Robles Junction. Proceed S on Route 286 approximately 37 miles. Follow signs to headquarters 3 miles E.)

4. June 30, 1999, 3 to 5 P.M., Mary E. Dill Primary School, Multi Purpose Room 10451 South Sasabe, Three Points (Robles Junction), Arizona.

5. June 30, 1999, 7 to 9 P.M., Plaza Hotel and Conference Center (Wildcat I and II), 1900 E. Speedway Boulevard, Tucson, Arizona.

Requests to speak at a public scoping meeting(s) should be received by Mrs. Russell, the NEPA Document Manager, at the address indicated below on or before June 25, 1999. Requests to speak may also be made at the time of registration for the scoping meeting(s). However, persons who submitted advance requests to speak will be given priority if time should be limited during the meeting.

ADDRESSES: Written comments or suggestions on the scope of the EIS and requests to speak at the scoping meeting(s) should be addressed to: Mrs. Ellen Russell, NEPA Document Manager, Office of Fossil Energy (FE-27), U.S. Department of Energy, 1000 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington DC 20585-0350; phone 202-586-9624, facsimile: 202-287-5736, or electronic mail at Ellen.Russell@hq.doe.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For information on the proposed project or to receive a copy of the Draft EIS when it is issued, contact Mrs. Russell at the address listed in the **ADDRESSES** section of this notice.

For general information on the DOE NEPA review process, contact: Carol M. Borgstrom, Director, Office of NEPA Policy and Assistance (EH-42), U.S. Department of Energy 1000 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20585-0119; Phone: 202-586-4600 or leave a message at 800-472-2756; Facsimile: 202-586-7031.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Background and Need for Agency****Action**

Executive Order 10485, as amended by Executive Order 12038, requires that a Presidential permit be issued by DOE

before electric transmission facilities may be constructed, connected, operated, or maintained at the U.S. international border. The Executive Order provides that a Presidential permit may be issued after a finding that the proposed project is consistent with the public interest. In determining consistency with the public interest, DOE considers the impacts of the project on the reliability of the U.S. electric power system and on the environment. The regulations implementing the Executive Order have been codified at 10 CFR 205.320-205.329. Issuance of the permit indicates that there is no Federal objection to the project, but does not mandate that the project be completed.

On December 28, 1998, PNM, a regulated public utility, filed an application for a Presidential permit with the Office of Fossil Energy of DOE. PNM proposes to construct two transmission lines on a single right-of-way extending approximately 140 to 230 miles from the electric switchyard near the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station (PVNGS), located approximately 30 miles west of Phoenix, Arizona, to the U.S.-Mexico border in the vicinity of Nogales or Sasabe, Arizona. South of the border, PNM would extend the lines approximately 60 to 120 miles to the Santa Ana Substation, located in the City of Santa Ana, Sonora, Mexico, and owned by the Comision Federal de Electricidad (CFE), the national electric utility of Mexico. In its application for a Presidential permit, PNM identified three alternative corridors for construction of the cross-border transmission lines. These corridors, Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 below, were the subject of public meetings conducted in Nogales, Tucson, Patagonia, Sells, Ajo, Gila Bend, and Casa Grande, Arizona, in March 1999.

During these meetings, residents and interested groups provided comments that have led to the identification of three additional alternative corridors (Alternatives 4, 5, and 6) that will be studied in the EIS. The purpose of this notice is to reopen the scoping period for the EIS and to announce additional public scoping meetings to collect additional comments, particularly on Alternatives 4, 5, and 6. To assist the first time reader, a description of each of the corridors follows. Oral and written comments previously submitted on Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 have been entered in the official record of this proceeding and need not be resubmitted.

Alternative 1

This alternative corridor begins at the electrical switchyard near the Palo Verde Nuclear Generating Station (PVNGS), continues south, following existing transmission lines, past Gila Bend and across the Barry M. Goldwater Air Force Range to Ajo where it turns southeast to the vicinity of Why and continues across the western boundary of the Tohono O'odham Nation and then southeast to the international border (145 miles in the U.S., 264 miles total).

Alternative 2

This alternative corridor proceeds south and east from the electrical switchyard near the PVNGS to the vicinity of Mobile where it turns south crossing the middle to eastern area of the Tohono O'odham Nation and then proceeds southeast to the international border in the vicinity of San Miguel (158 miles in the U.S., 240 miles total).

Alternative 3

This alternative corridor extends southeasterly from the electrical switchyard near the PVNGS to Interstate 10, approximately three miles north of Red Rock. From this point, the corridor continues in a southeasterly direction, following I-10 and existing transmission lines, through Tucson, to Arizona Highway 83. East of Highway 83 the corridor turns south, following a designated utility corridor (that does not contain transmission lines) to Sonoita, then southwest to Patagonia, crossing the border in the vicinity of Nogales (234 miles in the U.S., 301 miles total).

Alternative 4

This alternative corridor extends southeasterly from the electrical switchyard near the PVNGS to I-10, approximately three miles north of Red Rock. From this point, the line continues in a southeasterly direction, following I-10 and existing transmission lines to Marana. At Marana, this alternative corridor turns south, following an existing powerline corridor west of the Saguaro National Park, across the eastern edge of the Tohono O'odham Nation Schuk Toak District (known as the Garcia Strip) to an area just north of Three Points (Robles Junction). From Three Points, this alternative corridor heads southwest toward the Baboquivari Mountains on new right-of-way. This alternative corridor remains west of the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge and east of the Baboquivari Mountains, crossing into Mexico near Sasabe (209 miles in the U.S., 288 miles total).

Alternative 5

This alternative corridor extends southeasterly from the electrical switchyard near the PVNGS to I-10, approximately three miles north of Red Rock. The corridor continues in a southeasterly direction, following I-10 and existing transmission lines, through Tucson. Near the intersection of I-10 and Business Route 19, the corridor turns south, paralleling Business Route 19 and I-19, passing Sahuarita and Green Valley. The corridor remains well east of I-19, gradually approaching I-19 near Amado and Tubac, and continuing south crossing the border in Nogales (216 miles in the U.S., 283 miles total).

Alternative 6

This alternative corridor is the same as Alternate 4 from the electrical switchyard near the PVNGS to an area north of Three Points (Robles Junction.). From Three Points, this alternative corridor would turn southeast, following an existing powerline corridor across the southwestern corner of the San Xavier District of the Tohono O'odham Nation and then east, across an area south of ASARCO's Mission Complex Mine Area. This alternative corridor continues east, following an existing transmission corridor, across I-19 and Business Route 19 to a point east of Sahuarita. This corridor then turns south following the same route as Alternative 4, crossing the border in Nogales (229 miles in the U.S., 296 miles total).

Battelle Memorial Institute is assisting DOE in preparation of the EIS. Battelle is also maintaining an EIS web site for DOE at: www.battelle.org/projects/pnmeis. From this site, the PNM Presidential permit application can be downloaded, as well as the project fact sheet, verbatim transcripts from the March 1999 public scoping meetings, and other project-related information.

Issued in Washington, DC, on June 4, 1999.

Anthony J. Como,

Manager, Electric Power Regulation, Office of Coal and Power Im/Ex, Office of Coal and Power Systems, Office of Fossil Energy.

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DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Notice of Availability of Solicitation for Applications of Petroleum Technologies on Non-Allotted Native American Lands

AGENCY: National Petroleum Technology Office through the Federal Energy Technology Center, Pittsburgh, Department of Energy.

ACTION: Issuance of financial assistance solicitation.

SUMMARY: The U. S. Department of Energy's (DOE) National Petroleum Technology Office (NPTO) through the Federal Energy Technology Center (FETC) announces that it intends to issue a competitive Program Solicitation (PS), No. DE-PS26-99BC15184 for the program entitled "Applications of Petroleum Technologies on Non-allotted Native American Lands". Through this solicitation, NPTO seeks to support applications conducting applied research for development, exploration and environmental solutions for problems on Native American and Alaskan Native Corporation lands whose mineral rights are held in common for the benefit of the tribe. Applications will be subjected to a comparative merit review by a DOE technical panel, and awards will be made to a limited number of applicants on the basis of the scientific merit, application of relevant program policy factors, and the availability of funds.

DATES: The solicitation is expected to be ready for release by June 17, 1999 and will have two (2) separate closing dates for submission of applications. The first closing date will be on or about August 17, 1999 and the second closing date on or about October 19, 1999. It should be noted that applications will only be considered for the closing date for which they are submitted. Applications must be prepared and submitted in accordance with the instructions and forms in the Program Solicitation and prior to submitting applications, check for any changes (i.e. closing date of solicitation) and/or amendments, if any through the Internet at FETC's Home Page <<http://www.fetc.doe.gov/business>>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Larry D. Gillham, U.S. Department of Energy, Federal Energy Technology Center, Acquisition and Assistance Division, P.O. Box 3628, Tulsa, OK 74101-3628; (Telephone: (918) 699-2034, FAX: (918) 699-2038, E-mail: gillham@npto.doe.gov).

ADDRESSES: The solicitation will be available through the Internet at FETC's Home Page <<http://www.fetc.doe.gov/business>>. TELEPHONE REQUESTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR ANY FORMAT VERSION OF THE SOLICITATION.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Through Program Solicitation No. DE-PS26-99BC15184, the Department of Energy seeks applications for innovative technical approaches to apply research for development, exploration and