

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Development

Central Electric Power Cooperative: Notice of Finding of No Significant Impact

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA

ACTION: Notice of Finding of No Significant Impact.

SUMMARY: The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) has made a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) with respect to a request for possible financing assistance to Carroll Electric Cooperative Corporation for the construction of the Dry Creek to Smyrna Transmission Line project in Carroll and Madison counties, Arkansas.

FURTHER INFORMATION: To obtain copies of the Environmental Assessment (EA) and FONSI, or for further information, contact: Environmental and Historic Preservation Division, USDA Rural Development, Rural Utilities Service, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-1570. The EA and FONSI are also available for public review at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/resources/environmental-studies/assessment/dry-creek-smyrna-transmission-line>. Questions and comments should be emailed to RUS at RUSPublicComments@usda.gov or left at (202) 720-1970. Phone messages will be recorded and should be used only if there is no convenient access to email.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The proposed project consists of building a 161 kilovolt (kV) transmission line between the Dry Creek Switching Station and the Smyrna Transmission-Distribution Substation. The Dry Creek to Smyrna transmission line is 31.4 miles in length and will utilize H-frame steel structures. Carroll Electric Cooperative Corporation will utilize a 100-foot-wide right-of-way (ROW) and temporary construction access roads to construct the transmission line, along with additional ROW to install guy wires. Construction of the transmission line is proposed to commence in winter 2023 and be completed in fall 2024. Alternatives considered by RUS and Carroll Electric Cooperative Corporation include: No action; route alternatives. The alternatives are discussed in the Dry Creek to Smyrna Transmission Line EA. The RUS has reviewed and approved the EA for the proposed project.

The availability of the EA for public review was announced via notice in the following newspaper: Madison County Record on January 26 & February 2, 2023. A 14-day comment period was announced in the newspaper notice. The EA was also available for public review at the USDA Rural Development website, as well the Carroll Electric Cooperative Corporation office in Berryville, Arkansas. No comments were received during the public comment period.

Based on its EA and commitments made by Carroll Electric Cooperative Corporation, and public comments received, RUS has concluded that the project would have no significant impact (or no impacts) to water quality, wetlands, floodplains, land use, aesthetics, transportation, or human health and safety.

The proposed project will have no adverse effect on resources listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The Agency has also concluded that the proposed project is not likely to affect federally listed threatened and endangered species or designated critical habitat thereof. The proposed project would not disproportionately affect minority and/or low-income populations.

No other potential significant impacts resulting from the proposed project have been identified. Therefore, RUS has determined that this FONSI 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 §§ 1500-1508), and USDA Rural Development's Environmental Policies and Procedures (7 CFR Part 1970) for its action related to the project.

RUS is satisfied that the environmental impacts of the proposed project have been adequately addressed. RUS's federal action would not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment, and as such it will not prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for its action related to the proposed project.

Dated: February 16, 2023