

East Kentucky Power Cooperative: Notice of Availability for an Environmental Assessment

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA

ACTION: Notice of Availability of a Draft Environmental Assessment for the Liberty Reciprocating Internal Combustion Engine Project (Project)

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Rural Utilities Service (RUS), as required by the National Environmental Policy Act, is issuing a Draft Environmental Assessment in connection with possible impacts related to a project proposed by East Kentucky Power Cooperative (EKPC), of Winchester, Kentucky. EKPC is requesting a loan from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) RUS to construct a Reciprocating Internal Combustion Engine (RICE) facility in Casey County, Kentucky and to rebuild and upgrade existing electric transmission lines in Casey and Marion Counties, Kentucky.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions and comments should be emailed to the Environmental and Historic Preservation Division, USDA Rural Development, Rural Utilities Service at:

RUSPublicComments@usda.gov

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Liberty RICE Project includes the construction and operation of an approximately 214-megawatt (MW) net RICE power plant to meet projected load demand and support the integration of increased amounts of intermittent renewable energy generation on the EKPC system. The plant will be powered by natural gas with fuel oil as a backup option. Twelve individual 18-MW RICE would be constructed at a site approximately 3.2 miles north of Liberty in Casey County, Kentucky (Figure 1). The 108-acre Project Site is currently agricultural land that EKPC would develop for the Project. Approximately 43 acres would be permanently disturbed within the proposed fenced facility, 10 acres would be permanently disturbed within new permanent rights of way, 33.8 acres would be temporarily disturbed during construction, and 21.2 acres would be undisturbed. A security fence would be constructed around the permanent facilities.

Operation of the Liberty RICE facility would require installation of a new natural gas pipeline lateral and a new water pipeline to service the facility. The pipeline lateral would extend approximately 530 feet southeast from the Project Site boundary to a tap point on an existing pipeline. The water pipeline would tap into an existing water main located approximately 0.1 mile east of the Project Site. Figure 2 shows the total undisturbed area, construction disturbance area, and permanent disturbance area.

The Project also includes upgrades to approximately 6.6 miles of existing electric transmission line, rebuild of approximately 7.6 miles of existing transmission line, and construction of 0.3 mile of new interconnection transmission line. Approximately 3.9 miles of transmission line upgrade and rebuild would occur approximately 1 mile northwest of Lebanon in Marion County, Kentucky. The remaining transmission line rebuilds and upgrades would occur in Casey County, Kentucky, extending northwest and southeast from the proposed power plant. The locations of the transmission line rebuilds and upgrades are shown in Figure 1.

Burns & McDonnell Engineering Company, Inc., an environmental consultant, prepared an Environmental Assessment for EKPC that describes the Project, assesses the proposed Project's environmental impacts, and summarizes applicable mitigation measures used to minimize environmental effects. RUS has conducted an independent evaluation of the Environmental Assessment and believes that it accurately assesses the impacts of the proposed Project. No significant impacts are expected as a result of Project construction or operation.

Written questions and comments should be emailed to RUS at the email address provided above. RUS will accept questions and comments on the environmental assessment for 14 days from the first date of publication of this notice. All comments must be provided electronically with no hard copy comments being accepted at this time.

Copies of the environmental assessment and supporting documentation will be available for public review on RUS's website at : <https://www.rd.usda.gov/resources/environmental-studies/assessment/liberty-reciprocating-internal-combustion-engine-rice-project>

Any final action by RUS related to the proposed Project will be subject to, and contingent upon, compliance with all relevant Federal environmental laws and regulations and completion of environmental review procedures as prescribed by 7 CFR Part 1970, Environmental Policies and Procedures.

Dated: March 2025

Figure 1: Liberty RICE Project Location

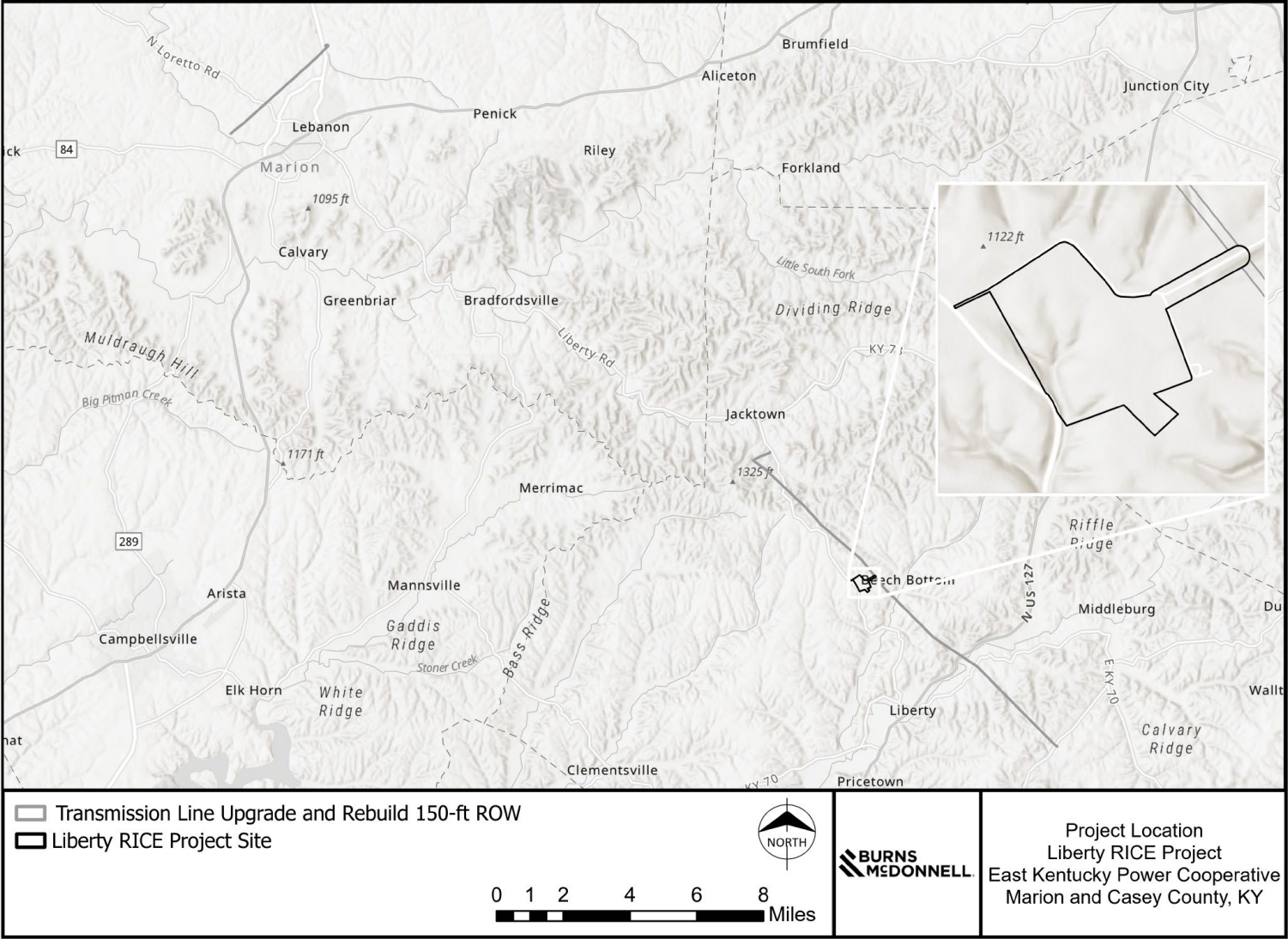


Figure 2: Project Site Disturbance Areas

