

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Development

Georgia Transmission Corporation: Notice of Finding of No Significant Impact

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA

ACTION: Notice of Finding of No Significant Impact

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Utilities Service (RUS) has issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) with respect to a request for possible financing assistance to Georgia Transmission Corporation (GTC) for the proposed construction of the Lake Varner-Cornish Mountain 230 kilovolt (kV) Transmission Line Project in Newton County, Georgia.

Georgia Transmission will construct an approximately 5.2-mile 230 kV transmission line consisting of 52 single-pole structures. These structures, composed of spun concrete or steel, will have a vertical configuration when collocating with roads and a delta configuration when cross-country, i.e., not roadside. The average span between poles is approximately 521 feet; however, spans range from 105 feet to nearly 885 feet. Pole heights range from 90 to 145 feet above grade and is highly dependent on topography and the presence or absence of attachments to poles, such as distribution underbuild.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: Submit questions and requests to:

RUSPublicComments@usda.gov

Copies of the Environmental Assessment, Appendices and FONSI are available for public review at: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/resources/environmental-studies/assessment/lake-varner-cornish-mountain-230-kv-transmission-line>

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Georgia Transmission will acquire approximately 41.3 acres of easement from public and private landowners on which to locate the line. The width of the transmission line right-of-way (ROW) will vary in size, from 25-30-feet when collocating with public roads to 100-feet in width elsewhere. Regardless of width, approximately 24.66 acres of transmission line easement have woody vegetation and will be cleared ground-to-sky to establish in perpetuity an area of low growing vegetation utilizing mechanized equipment and/or low ground pressure and hand clearing techniques.

Access for construction and maintenance of the transmission structures will occur along the acquired easements for the cross-country segments, or directly from adjacent roadways for the roadside segments. The only off-ROW access will be along a short, existing path on Georgia Power property to accommodate modifications to the existing Cornish Mountain Substation. In this location, additional easement will be temporary, but could be up to 30 feet in width, and may require minor improvements, such as blading or smoothing of the ground surface and side-trimming of encroaching vegetation.

Georgia Transmission will modify the existing Cornish Mountain Substation (owned by Georgia Power) to tie the new Lake Varner – Cornish Mountain transmission line into the substation. The Lake Varner 230 kV substation is currently under construction by Georgia Transmission on an industrial customer's property. Once complete, the substation will be modified to tie the Lake Varner – Cornish Mountain 230 kV transmission line into the Lake Varner Substation. Further actions will

also include modifying the substation to include four additional 230/34.5 kV, 150 MVA LTC transformers. This modification will occur within the substation fence.

The proposed Lake Varner – Cornish Mountain 230 kV transmission line must cross over the existing Covington #3 – East Social Circle 115 kV transmission line. Therefore, approximately ten structures along the Covington #3 – East Social Circle 115 kV transmission line will be modified to construct the proposed Lake Varner – Cornish Mountain 230 kV transmission line over it. This work will occur entirely within the existing Covington #3 – East Social Circle transmission line easement.

RUS conducted an independent evaluation of the EA prepared by GTC, concurred with its scope and content, and adopted it as the agency's EA.

RUS has evaluated the proposed Project's purpose and need, reasonable alternatives (including a no action alternative), and potential impacts to the environment, and has concluded that the proposed Project will not have a significant impact on the human environment. Since RUS action will not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment, the preparation of an environmental impact statement is not necessary for this proposed Project. RUS has determined that a FONSI fulfills its obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. §§ 4321-4347), and USDA's procedures for integrating the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 7 CFR Part 1b.5 for its action related to the proposed Project.

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