

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Rural Development

Associated Electric Cooperative, Inc.: Notice of Availability of an Environmental Assessment

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA

ACTION: Notice of Availability of an Environmental Assessment

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Rural Utilities Service (RUS), as required by the National Environmental Policy Act, is issuing an environmental assessment (EA) in connection with possible impacts related to a project proposed by Associated Electric Cooperative, Inc. (AECI), of Springfield, Missouri. The proposal is for the building of a new electric generating facility in Payne County, Oklahoma. Associated Electric Cooperative, Inc. has submitted an application to the RUS for funding of the proposal.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Environmental and Historic Preservation Division, USDA Rural Development, Rural Utilities Service, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250-1570. Questions and comments should be emailed to RUS at RUSPublicComments@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Ripley Energy Center will consist of a simple-cycle gas turbine and associated equipment with a nominal capacity of 421 megawatts (MW). The project will burn natural gas with the capability to use fuel oil as a backup and employ selective catalytic reduction (SCR) technology to control emissions of nitrogen oxides. The project site is approximately 50 acres that is approximately 6.5 miles north of Ripley, Oklahoma.

The project includes a new 0.5-mile-long transmission line to access the existing transmission line right-of-way near the site. From that location, 5.5 miles of transmission line in the existing right-of-way will be rebuilt to the existing Stillwater Substation. It includes a new onsite switchyard. A new natural gas lateral will be constructed to supply fuel to the project. It will be approximately 3,000 feet long, with only 120 feet offsite, and extend to a tap point on the directly adjacent Enable Oklahoma Intrastate Transmission, LLC pipeline. The project will include a new approximately 1-mile water line to upgrade an existing water line.

Burns and McDonnell, an environmental consultant, prepared an environmental assessment for RUS that describes the project, assesses the proposed project's environmental impacts, and summarizes as applicable any 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 the construction of the project.

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 at the Cushing Public Library, Yale Public Library, and: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/resources/environmental-studies/assessment/ripley-energy-center>

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.

A general location map of the proposal is shown below.

Dated: July 31, 2024

