

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Development

Associated Electric Cooperative, Inc.: 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 Associated Electric Cooperative, Inc. for the construction of the Ripley Energy Center project in Payne County, Oklahoma.

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 the Cushing Public Library, Yale Public Library, and <https://www.rd.usda.gov/resources/environmental-studies/assessment/ripley-energy-center>. Questions and comments should be emailed to RUS at RUSPublicComments@usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The proposed project consists of building the Ripley Energy Center project, will be a new natural gas-fired simple-cycle electric generating facility. The Project consists of a single advanced class simple-cycle gas turbine generator and associated equipment with a nominal capacity of 421 Megawatts. 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 and is 6.5 miles north of Ripley. 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. Alternatives considered by RUS and Associated Electric Cooperative, Inc. include: No action; alternate generation technologies, alternative sites. The alternatives are discussed in the Ripley Energy Center 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: Cushing Citizen on July 31 & August 7, 2024, and Yale News on August 1 & 8, 2024. A comment period was announced in the newspaper notice. The EA was also available for public review at the USDA Rural Development website, Cushing Public Library, Yale Public Library, as well the Associated Electric Cooperative, Inc. office. No comments were received during the public comment period.

Based on its EA and mitigation commitments made by Associated Electric Cooperative, Inc., and public comments received, RUS has concluded that the project will have no significant impact 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 will 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. §§ 4321–4347), 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 potential federal action will 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: September 5, 2024