

Skeleton Creek Draft EIS Public Meeting 1 Transcript

11/9/2021

1

00:00:24.660 --> 00:00:34.380

Meg Perry | SWCA: Good afternoon, welcome to those who are just joining us, my name is Meg Perry I'll be facilitating the meeting we'll be getting started at the top of the hour, so.

2

00:00:36.180 --> 00:00:39.360

Meg Perry | SWCA: Welcome get settled in and we'll be getting started shortly.

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00:01:53.940 --> 00:01:59.160

Meg Perry | SWCA: As I was just mentioning we'll be getting started at the top of the hour, just a couple minutes.

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00:01:59.640 --> 00:02:11.850

Meg Perry | SWCA: and for your reference while you're getting settled I'm just putting the project website in the chat there's some background information and documents there for your reference if that's helpful as you're getting settled in today.

5

00:04:02.790 --> 00:04:18.240

Meg Perry | SWCA: Alright, good afternoon everyone and welcome my name is Meg Perry I'm with SWCA Environmental Consultants and I'll be facilitating today's public meeting focused on Skeleton Creek Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

6

00:04:19.800 --> 00:04:30.270

Meg Perry | SWCA: Welcome to those of you who joined us today we really appreciate you being here, and you will see that this meeting is being recorded so just noting that if you don't wish to be recorded.

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00:04:31.980 --> 00:04:33.630

Meg Perry | SWCA: Now, would be the time to sign off.

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00:04:35.910 --> 00:04:46.860

Meg Perry | SWCA: I have put the project website in the chat as just a point of reference for everyone that includes the link to the draft environment impact statement and other background materials.

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00:04:48.930 --> 00:05:00.540

Meg Perry | SWCA: And this is the first have to build meetings, the first today and the next coming up tomorrow evening so with that I'll turn it to Kristen Bastis with Rural Utility Service to welcome everyone.

10

00:05:03.330 --> 00:05:15.870

Kristen Bastis - RUS: Thank you, yes, welcome everyone to the public meeting for the Skeleton Creek Project in Garfield County Oklahoma we're happy that you could join us today and we're.

11

00:05:17.460 --> 00:05:22.920

Kristen Bastis - RUS: Looking forward to hearing your comments and questions.

12

00:05:28.920 --> 00:05:29.100

Meg Perry | SWCA: hey.

13

00:05:29.130 --> 00:05:34.140

Meg Perry | SWCA: So just a couple reminders about the purpose of today's meeting and walkthrough of the agenda.

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00:05:35.970 --> 00:05:53.790

Meg Perry | SWCA: purposes for today are to learn about the project itself understand the NEPA process National Environmental Policy Act process that is currently underway and to learn about how to provide public comments on the draft environmental impact statement that's part of that process.

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00:05:55.080 --> 00:06:00.900

Meg Perry | SWCA: So we will begin here we're currently walking through welcome and logistics.

16

00:06:02.100 --> 00:06:10.530

Meg Perry | SWCA: And agency opening remarks, and then we will have a brief presentation covering the National Environmental Policy Act process.

17

00:06:11.340 --> 00:06:25.980

Meg Perry | SWCA: The proposed project alternatives considered the draft environmental impact statement findings and next steps, and then the remainder of the time following the presentation will be open for questions and comments from participants.

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00:06:29.280 --> 00:06:33.900

Meg Perry | SWCA: So with that just a couple of reminders about your opportunities to participate.

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00:06:36.000 --> 00:06:41.910

Meg Perry | SWCA: So this is a Zoom webinar which means you have joined as an attendee and you're in listen only mode.

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00:06:43.590 --> 00:07:01.170

Meg Perry | SWCA: For the moment, during the presentation, we welcome you to ask questions, using the Q&A feature so in your Zoom ribbon that little black bar and Zoom you should see it two talk bubbles with Q&A and if you click on that you can type in your questions there.

21

00:07:03.450 --> 00:07:12.660

Meg Perry | SWCA: And once the presentation concludes you'll also have the opportunity to ask verbal questions, using the raise hand function, and you can find that either.

22

00:07:14.190 --> 00:07:22.590

Meg Perry | SWCA: Under the participants, you might click on participants and you'll see the raise hand down at the bottom there or under reactions, where you see.

23

00:07:23.250 --> 00:07:34.710

Meg Perry | SWCA: That little button, depending on the version of Zoom you have it might be an either of those two places participants or reactions so you can raise your hand and we'll call on you to share your question or comment, following the presentation.

24

00:07:35.940 --> 00:07:48.810

Meg Perry | SWCA: And do watch the chat, as I mentioned I'll be putting a few links and pieces of information there for you to reference where it's a little easier to click on like when you're seeing them on the slide.

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00:07:51.420 --> 00:07:57.300

Meg Perry | SWCA: So with that I will turn it to Kristen to begin the presentation.

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00:08:02.970 --> 00:08:06.150

Kristen Bastis - RUS: Thank you so we're just gonna kind of go through.

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00:08:07.230 --> 00:08:09.330

Kristen Bastis - RUS: The basic NEPA process.

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00:08:10.440 --> 00:08:34.620

Kristen Bastis - RUS: And where we are at the present time, so in the spring, we started with our public scoping and we had a comment period and some public meetings for that and then over the summer and into the fall the consultant SWCA was developing the draft environmental impact statement.

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00:08:35.640 --> 00:08:48.450

Kristen Bastis - RUS: And now that draft has been published and there is a 45-day comment period from October 4 to December 6 and we're right in the middle of that right now so.

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00:08:50.250 --> 00:08:58.500

Kristen Bastis - RUS: There is a link on the website that was provided in the chat to submit public comments.

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00:08:59.850 --> 00:09:18.930

Kristen Bastis - RUS: And then, after the public comment period is over we'll collect those comments and consider them and provide a final EIS in winter early spring and then we'll publish a decision.

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00:09:20.310 --> 00:09:20.940

Kristen Bastis - RUS: later on.

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00:09:22.110 --> 00:09:38.670

Kristen Bastis - RUS: And we do need your input to help determine revisions or additions to the final EIS, so please do read whatever sections of the draft environmental impact statement are where you have concerns or read the whole thing.

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00:09:39.720 --> 00:09:44.190

Kristen Bastis - RUS: And do provide us some input on that.

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00:09:46.080 --> 00:09:50.700

Kristen Bastis - RUS: we'd be happy to hear it so next slide.

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00:09:52.380 --> 00:10:09.570

Kristen Bastis - RUS: And running concurrently with the NEPA process is the National Historic Preservation Act or Section 106 process we initiated this Section 106 process and the about the same time we initiated the public scoping process.

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00:10:10.860 --> 00:10:12.570

Kristen Bastis - RUS: We talked to the Oklahoma.

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00:10:12.570 --> 00:10:15.780

Kristen Bastis - RUS: SHPO and or the State Historic Preservation Office.

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00:10:15.870 --> 00:10:17.280

Kristen Bastis - RUS: And the Office of.

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00:10:18.450 --> 00:10:25.410

Kristen Bastis - RUS: Oklahoma Archaeological Society and we sent letters to interested tribes.

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00:10:26.790 --> 00:10:30.330

Kristen Bastis - RUS: To see if they had any input on the project.

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00:10:31.980 --> 00:10:40.830

Kristen Bastis - RUS: And that helped us identify our consulting parties and we've had a couple of meetings about the.

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00:10:42.150 --> 00:10:53.640

Kristen Bastis - RUS: The project in terms of Section 106 compliance and we're still in the identification phase of finding out if there are any historic properties within the project area.

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00:10:54.750 --> 00:10:56.280

Kristen Bastis - RUS: that's where we are right now.

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00:10:57.360 --> 00:11:03.690

Kristen Bastis - RUS: And, as this process goes forward will we will go through these remaining steps if necessary.

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00:11:07.620 --> 00:11:10.740

Kristen Bastis - RUS: So we can go on to the next slide.

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00:11:13.770 --> 00:11:20.250

Kristen Bastis - RUS: So, in the draft environmental impact statement, the issues that were evaluated are here on this slide.

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00:11:22.170 --> 00:11:35.490

Kristen Bastis - RUS: Many different kinds of resources, are looked at the soils and the geology definitely air quality and any noise issues, the biological resources are.

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00:11:36.810 --> 00:11:50.850

Kristen Bastis - RUS: kind of a large section and include vegetation and wetlands and streams and riparian areas, and it also includes wildlife and that in is flora and fauna.

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00:11:52.050 --> 00:12:02.490

Kristen Bastis - RUS: Including any special status species that are in the area water resources, those include surficial streams and aquifer.

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00:12:03.780 --> 00:12:11.610

Kristen Bastis - RUS: And underground water sources, the type of land use and how or if that will change.

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00:12:12.660 --> 00:12:17.730

Kristen Bastis - RUS: Any visual resources, this is a large solar installation so.

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00:12:19.560 --> 00:12:21.930

Kristen Bastis - RUS: There will be, it will be seen from.

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00:12:23.310 --> 00:12:32.430

Kristen Bastis - RUS: At least around the perimeter and the section of Oklahoma tends to be on the flatter side so might be visible for.

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00:12:33.480 --> 00:12:36.240

Kristen Bastis - RUS: Some distance so that is being analyzed.

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00:12:37.380 --> 00:12:57.960

Kristen Bastis - RUS: transportation, which is the roads around and through the project area and how the project will affect traffic and things like that, and then, of course, cultural resources archaeological sites and historic farmsteads and century farms and and then also tribal consultation.

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00:12:59.400 --> 00:13:06.510

Kristen Bastis - RUS: talking to the tribal Historic Preservation Offices to see if they have any concerns about the project.

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00:13:07.590 --> 00:13:17.220

Kristen Bastis - RUS: And then, public health and safety issues and socio economics and environmental justice issues are also covered in the draft EIS.

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00:13:22.020 --> 00:13:37.950

Kristen Bastis - RUS: yeah okay um yeah So this is the email address skeletoncreeksolarpubliccomments@usda.gov and that email address can also be found on the website, which is the link in the chat.

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00:13:38.970 --> 00:13:42.210

Kristen Bastis - RUS: And then of course the website is listed right next to it.

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00:13:43.260 --> 00:13:49.530

Kristen Bastis - RUS: here on the slide and we've posted all of the material related to this project.

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00:13:50.910 --> 00:14:00.840

Kristen Bastis - RUS: that's been generated so far, so our public scoping materials up there, the presentation that was done for the public meetings back in the spring.

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00:14:02.340 --> 00:14:03.030

Kristen Bastis - RUS: Are.

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00:14:04.830 --> 00:14:09.600

Kristen Bastis - RUS: There was a site selection study that's published there on the draft EIS is up.

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00:14:11.760 --> 00:14:22.830

Kristen Bastis - RUS: So all the information that we have about the project is up on the website now and including this presentation this presentation is already up on the website.

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00:14:24.660 --> 00:14:30.480

Kristen Bastis - RUS: So you can look at it again if you need to find out any information or.

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00:14:31.800 --> 00:14:32.910

Kristen Bastis - RUS: double check anything.

68

00:14:36.210 --> 00:14:36.870

Kristen Bastis - RUS: Next slide.

69

00:14:40.020 --> 00:14:51.600

Kristen Bastis - RUS: So this is a basic project overview map the application area was quite large over 12,000 acres and that was done so that.

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00:14:52.920 --> 00:14:55.500

Kristen Bastis - RUS: alternatives could be developed so.

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00:14:56.790 --> 00:15:10.560

Kristen Bastis - RUS: NextEra, decided to look at a larger area and then narrow down their actual project area, according to the any effects that the project would have so they could.

72

00:15:11.640 --> 00:15:14.580

Kristen Bastis - RUS: minimize those adverse effects.

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00:15:15.810 --> 00:15:19.530

Kristen Bastis - RUS: By by this actual siting of the project.

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00:15:20.610 --> 00:15:40.320

Kristen Bastis - RUS: Which is going to be a large solar array and storage facility and it will tie into the grid at that little yellow square, which is a substation, and this is, thank you for pointing that out, and then this is located in Garfield County in Oklahoma.

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00:15:41.790 --> 00:15:43.200

Kristen Bastis - RUS: near Enid Oklahoma.

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00:15:49.920 --> 00:16:02.700

Kristen Bastis - RUS: And there is a purchase agreement with Western Farmers Electric Cooperative, which has 17 member distribution cooperatives in Oklahoma and a little bit into New Mexico.

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00:16:03.330 --> 00:16:12.450

Kristen Bastis - RUS: there's a 20-year agreement, and so this generate the electricity that's generated here will go to the people of Oklahoma and a little bit in New Mexico.

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00:16:13.770 --> 00:16:14.340

Kristen Bastis - RUS: and

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00:16:16.200 --> 00:16:19.470

Kristen Bastis - RUS: So it will serve the local communities.

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00:16:29.070 --> 00:16:31.800

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: And I think that's my.

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00:16:31.980 --> 00:16:32.700

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Time up.

82

00:16:32.880 --> 00:16:33.390

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: To hop in.

83

00:16:35.400 --> 00:16:51.060

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Well, welcome all my name is Susan Wilmot I'm with SWCA Environmental Consultants and we are the third party contractors hired to assist RUS with preparation of the environmental impact statements, I just wanted to take.

84

00:16:51.060 --> 00:16:54.330

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Maybe about 10 minutes to do a very high level overview.

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00:16:54.900 --> 00:17:10.470

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: of some of the key contents and the draft EIS, as a Kristen and Meg already mentioned, if you have not done so, we definitely encourage you to go download a copy of that Draft EIS that's available on RUS' website.

86

00:17:11.760 --> 00:17:23.370

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Looking at the attendance at attendee list I don't know that we have the local Garfield County residents, but if if if we do, we also have a printed copy.

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00:17:24.000 --> 00:17:29.580

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: and electronic copy of the draft EIS available at the Enid Library as well.

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00:17:30.570 --> 00:17:39.630

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: So the EIS has four main chapters Chapter one really provides project background, such as some of the material that Kristen just went through.

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00:17:40.050 --> 00:17:54.660

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: As well as a detailed description of the project's purpose and need this is a brief recap the primary project purpose and need is really to provide Western Farmers Electric Cooperative.

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00:17:55.140 --> 00:18:06.270

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: With the generation capacity that they need, as the energy buyer to provide safe adequate and reliable power to their members at the lowest reasonable cost.

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00:18:07.050 --> 00:18:17.370

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: So that purpose, indeed, is provided much more detail and Chapter one if you're interested in reading more about that as Kristen already alluded to, we also talked about that.

92

00:18:18.990 --> 00:18:29.520

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: As part of our scoping presentation in March of this year, so you can also go to RUS' website and look at the scoping materials for additional information as well.

93

00:18:30.600 --> 00:18:45.360

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: But then jumping really into kind of more of the heart of the EIS starting with Chapter two, that is where the EIS discusses the alternatives development process so that EIS looks at three alternatives evaluates three alternatives.

94

00:18:46.500 --> 00:18:54.120

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: There are two action alternatives and one no action alternative, as listed on this slide next slide.

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00:18:57.810 --> 00:19:03.480

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: So the proposed action is the action that's being put forward by the applicant NextEra Energy

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00:19:04.080 --> 00:19:12.900

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: It again, it does consist of a 250 megawatt solar array plus the 200 megawatts of battery storage, as you can see.

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00:19:13.680 --> 00:19:23.940

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: On the slide it has a variety of project components, including the photovoltaic arrays the mounting structures the solar trackers.

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00:19:24.390 --> 00:19:34.170

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: A variety of power inverters and transformers additionally it has a linear structures, such as the access roads transmission lines collection lines.

99

00:19:34.710 --> 00:19:42.780

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: As well as the battery storage system itself additionally NextEra plans to fence the lands that contain those project components.

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00:19:43.320 --> 00:19:56.280

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: So, collectively, the project footprints is approximately 2,100 acres now I do you say approximately because the the proposed action design is still being refined.

101

00:19:57.000 --> 00:20:07.290

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: So we do anticipate providing any updates to that design, in the final EIS likewise the impacts that are disclosed in this, EIS.

102

00:20:07.710 --> 00:20:26.910

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Also, represent the best available information we have currently but are certainly subject to change based on comments and feedback we received during this Draft EIS comment period, as well as again any updates and changes to the project from the applicant.

103

00:20:28.230 --> 00:20:29.070

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: All right next slide.

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00:20:32.430 --> 00:20:40.350

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Just a little bit on timeline as of right now, and the applicant does intend to start construction in summer of next year.

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00:20:41.040 --> 00:20:55.260

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: assuming they have obtained all of the authorizations and permits at that point it's an 18 month estimated construction duration, with a targeted commercial operation date of December 2023.

106

00:20:57.750 --> 00:20:58.290

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Next slide.

107

00:21:00.210 --> 00:21:08.040

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: So in addition to the proposed action, the EIS does look at one other action alternative that that alternative.

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00:21:08.580 --> 00:21:20.670

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: is similar to proposed action and that it has the same project components, it has generally the same construction activities and duration, but it is sited on lands east.

109

00:21:21.120 --> 00:21:41.310

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Of the proposed action layout within that larger application area, so in the slide the red color parcels represent the proposed action and the yellow color parcels represent the other action alternative which covers approximately 1700 acres, it is important to note that.

110

00:21:42.600 --> 00:21:49.920

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: No land acquisition has happened for the other action alternative this these just represent lands that.

111

00:21:51.180 --> 00:22:01.800

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: could be suitable for construction, so if this alternative were selected the applicant would still need to go through the the land access process.

112

00:22:04.260 --> 00:22:06.090

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Okay next slide.

113

00:22:08.040 --> 00:22:15.990

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: The final alternative analyzed in the EIS is the no action alternative under this alternative the project would not be constructed.

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00:22:16.530 --> 00:22:26.790

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: and any impacts associated with the project would not occur, but that doesn't mean that there are there would be no impacts to resources.

115

00:22:27.600 --> 00:22:42.900

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: You know any ongoing activities or future projects future trends that would that would that could occur irregardless of the project could still result in changes to socio economic or environmental conditions over time.

116

00:22:43.530 --> 00:22:59.040

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: So when you read the EIS when you read the no action alternative it's capturing both the the lack of impacts from the proposed project, but still potential impacts from other current and reasonably foreseeable actions.

117

00:23:00.390 --> 00:23:11.850

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: So the no action, however, does not meet the purpose of need, it does not help Western Farmers increase their generation capacity to meet the electricity demands of their Member cooperatives.

118

00:23:12.330 --> 00:23:26.280

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: It also means that Western Farmers would lose opportunities to expand their renewable energy portfolio, but analysis of the no action alternative is required under the NEPA regs and so it's carried forward in the EIS.

119

00:23:27.690 --> 00:23:35.340

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: In addition to these three alternatives that are evaluating in the EIS RUS did go through, and tell about.

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00:23:36.060 --> 00:23:47.250

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: A more expansive alternative development process and looked at other alternatives that might be feasible for meeting the purpose in need and or reducing potential project impacts.

121

00:23:48.000 --> 00:23:54.870

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Those alternatives are provided in section 2.2 of the EIS if you're interested I definitely encourage you to.

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00:23:55.290 --> 00:24:03.810

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: To go, you know, take a look at what was considered it's a wide range of options such as alternative solar and battery technology.

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00:24:04.260 --> 00:24:23.310

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: You know other locations, you know options for transmission or point of interconnect but ultimately RUS made the decision that those other alternatives, would not be carried for because again either they did not meet purpose and need, or they did not resolve impacts.

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00:24:25.020 --> 00:24:30.450

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: associated with the project, but that information is there if you'd like to take a look at it.

125

00:24:32.580 --> 00:24:33.120

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Next slide.

126

00:24:34.470 --> 00:24:47.550

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: So this point I'm going to jump really briefly into some of the overarching resource impacts that are disclosed in the draft EIS Kristen touched on these earlier in the presentation.

127

00:24:49.140 --> 00:24:57.000

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Again there's a very detailed analysis in Chapter three so if you're interested in one or more resources, I definitely encourage you to go.

128

00:24:57.420 --> 00:25:06.810

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: read about read about them in in that chapter, and if you have questions or comments about that analysis to submit them.

129

00:25:07.800 --> 00:25:15.480

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: As as a comment for for RUS to to review and to respond to as part of this, this draft EIS public comment.

130

00:25:16.200 --> 00:25:34.260

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: period there's also a general summary table in Chapter two it's table 2.4-1 if you're looking for a briefer snapshot of kind of the range of impacts that are proposed or potentially could occur as part of this project.

131

00:25:35.310 --> 00:25:49.170

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: I'll also do a very quick overview at this at this point too, but I just want to know that I'm really just focusing on some of the the proposed action types of impacts again.

132

00:25:49.860 --> 00:26:00.450

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: There are some slight differences between the proposed action and the other action alternative there is also a no actual analysis, where you can find more details in Chapter three but for now.

133

00:26:01.680 --> 00:26:15.030

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: we'll dig in a little bit on some of these so this slide that's on the screen discusses the physical resources that we have that were evaluated in the, EIS so air quality.

134

00:26:15.540 --> 00:26:26.580

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: geology and soils and water resources with regards to air quality project activities most notably the construction equipment and and vehicle use.

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00:26:27.270 --> 00:26:39.060

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: would lead to increases in air emissions, as well as associate greenhouse gases and possibly additional fugitive dust generation, however long term.

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00:26:39.900 --> 00:26:57.600

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Replacing traditional fossil fuel sources in the grid with solar generated electricity could help reduce long term emissions in the region and also reduced risk of various health events associated with air pollution.

137

00:26:59.040 --> 00:27:06.570

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: For geology and soil certainly excavation associated with the project construction could displace or alter.

138

00:27:07.410 --> 00:27:25.560

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Existing soil and rock additionally ground disturbing activities could lead to localized increases in soil erosion, or soil compaction and, at least within foundation footprints we would see it also a small localized loss of soil productivity.

139

00:27:26.850 --> 00:27:45.540

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: For water resources, and this is done, yes streams and water bodies and floodplains the applicant has as Kristen mentioned this before that applicant has sited the project to avoid water aquatic resources to the maximum practical extent possible.

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00:27:47.100 --> 00:27:59.970

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: However, based on the draft design, there are still some potential for some temporary to long term impacts based on open trenching or sedimentation.

141

00:28:00.600 --> 00:28:09.120

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Groundwater use, however, is projected to be very minimal I just in terms of the amount of groundwater that that could be needed for the project.

142

00:28:10.590 --> 00:28:11.070

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Next slide.

143

00:28:13.020 --> 00:28:21.420

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: With regards to biological resources, certainly for vegetation any ground ground disturbing vegetation clearing activities in the project.

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00:28:21.840 --> 00:28:42.000

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: footprint would lead to vegetation removal, although some of that could be re vegetated post construction additionally within the fence lands that are outside the direct construction footprint those would be mowed, which could lead to some conversion to more grassland type type vegetation.

145

00:28:44.370 --> 00:28:55.080

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Based on our assessment, there are no special status plant species that we've identified in the analysis area that could be impacted by the project.

146

00:28:56.430 --> 00:29:10.110

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: And RUS anticipates that applicant would implement an invasive species and noxious weed management plan to help reduce the risk of invasive or noxious species spread.

147

00:29:11.190 --> 00:29:13.560

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Throughout the project footprint.

148

00:29:14.610 --> 00:29:34.650

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: For wetlands again similar to other aquatic resources to applicant has sited to avoid wetlands, to the extent possible, again based on the draft design, which is still subject to change there is some small potential for wetland fill or conversion.

149

00:29:35.760 --> 00:29:47.700

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: However, RUS does anticipate that the applicant will comply with Section 404 of the Clean Water Act and obtain any necessary authorizations through the US Army Corps to.

150

00:29:49.200 --> 00:29:51.330

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: To address wetland impacts.

151

00:29:53.010 --> 00:30:02.700

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: For wildlife again similar to vegetation any ground disturbing vegetation removing activities within the construction footprint.

152

00:30:03.180 --> 00:30:17.430

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: would lead to a wildlife habitat loss or alteration in the case of mowing activities RUS has submitted a draft Biological Assessment to the Fish and Wildlife Service so that is under.

153

00:30:18.330 --> 00:30:27.840

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: ha kicked off that the informal consultation process as part of that we, the EIS does make a preliminary determination of no effect.

154

00:30:28.230 --> 00:30:39.630

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: From most threatened or endangered wildlife species that are have potential to be present in the analysis area, as well as a may affect but not likely to adversely affect call for whooping crane.

155

00:30:40.230 --> 00:30:49.890

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: However, as now, as the consultation process moves forward we anticipate the outcomes of that will be disclosed in the final EIS.

156

00:30:51.480 --> 00:30:51.930

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Next slide.

157

00:30:54.690 --> 00:31:06.240

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Moving forward then into kind of social or human impacts and Kristen touched on this a little bit earlier, as well with regards to transportation certainly increases in equipment and.

158

00:31:07.290 --> 00:31:11.130

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: number of vehicles on local roads, could lead to.

159

00:31:12.390 --> 00:31:21.750

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: increases in traffic, however, RUS does anticipate the applicants will coordinate with all relevant agencies and comply with regulatory requirements.

160

00:31:22.470 --> 00:31:39.750

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: To help minimize traffic impacts likewise the applicant has prepared and analysis of glint and glare which found that there would be no glare occurrences for runway approaches associated with the adjacent Air Force Base or the Woodring Airport.

161

00:31:41.100 --> 00:31:43.980

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: For visual quality and aesthetic resources.

162

00:31:45.540 --> 00:31:48.720

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: As Kristen also mentioned slightly earlier.

163

00:31:50.100 --> 00:32:02.010

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: locations that have unobstructed views of construction activities and or permanent infrastructure would have changes or could have changes to their visual you know, so the view shed.

164

00:32:03.270 --> 00:32:14.310

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: However, you know revegetation restoration post construction restoration projects, as well as just existing vegetative screening would help minimize some of those impacts.

165

00:32:15.990 --> 00:32:26.640

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: For cultural and historic resources to date no archaeological resources have been identified, although there's certainly potential for them to exist and be discovered.

166

00:32:27.810 --> 00:32:37.530

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: during construction that there are also two known centennial farm and ranch properties that occur in the area of potential effects.

167

00:32:38.250 --> 00:32:57.600

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: As Kristen talked earlier RUS is actually consulting with the state agencies and tribes part of the Section 106 process to identify and subsequently resolve any potential adverse impacts if they're identified for the project.

168

00:32:59.700 --> 00:33:18.000

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: And then last point on this slide is land use, right now, the predominant land use in the analysis area is agricultural so certainly as part of the project, they would be conversion of the agricultural land to more developed energy uses, which would also result in changes.

169

00:33:19.020 --> 00:33:27.630

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: in land use for affected land owners, however, this changes would really be would occur voluntarily through lease agreements with applicant.

170

00:33:29.580 --> 00:33:33.900

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: The applicant also sited the project to avoid existing infrastructure.

171

00:33:35.010 --> 00:33:40.830

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: and includes things like pipelines distribution lines, and so the EIS anticipates that.

172

00:33:42.150 --> 00:33:44.730

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: existing infrastructure impacts would be negligible.

173

00:33:46.290 --> 00:33:46.800

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Next slide.

174

00:33:49.020 --> 00:34:02.160

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: This is the last slide I have on on some overarching Draft EIS findings, the first one is related to noise and again certainly most predominately during construction, there would be.

175

00:34:03.210 --> 00:34:22.350

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Temporary increases in noise levels due to traffic and various construction related related noise, however, EIS does not anticipate any significant adverse impacts to noise sensitive receptors these are things like schools and residences and.

176

00:34:23.460 --> 00:34:24.330

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: hospitals.

177

00:34:25.740 --> 00:34:31.200

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: That where they could have more long term harm from from noise impacts.

178

00:34:32.760 --> 00:34:42.060

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: For public health and safety again increased traffic increased a human activity could result in temporary increased.

179

00:34:42.780 --> 00:34:57.480

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: The safety risks, although RUS anticipates that the applicant would follow all OSHA and other safety requirements long term there is a slight risk associated with fire or severe weather, but again.

180

00:34:58.590 --> 00:35:09.720

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: The rest is an expectation is the applicant would comply with all best management practices such as ensuring compliance with building electric codes and designing structures.

181

00:35:11.280 --> 00:35:18.480

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: In accordance with the national electric safety code requirements to to be designed in a way to.

182

00:35:20.310 --> 00:35:21.810

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: account for and address.

183

00:35:22.860 --> 00:35:26.010

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: account for severe weather events and be more resilient those.

184

00:35:27.180 --> 00:35:42.150

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: On those but help reduce that long term risk for EMF electromagnetic field exposure Best Available science suggests that once the project is operational that those levels would be negligible.

185

00:35:43.860 --> 00:35:53.790

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: And the final item is socio economics environmental justice, there would definitely be economic benefits associated with the project through employment and local spending.

186

00:35:54.960 --> 00:36:11.460

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: With regards to environmental justice populations, at least, based on census data, there are no low income or minority populations if we're following EPA's so promising practices methodology that being said.

187

00:36:12.960 --> 00:36:16.860

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: If there if there were populations there, based on the.

188

00:36:18.390 --> 00:36:25.650

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: The other findings in the EIS you know impacts, to water quality air quality land use, public health and safety transportation.

189

00:36:26.070 --> 00:36:30.990

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Neither of those none of those rise to us have a significantly adverse level.

190

00:36:31.740 --> 00:36:40.710

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: In addition, RUS' in consultation with interested tribes, and the consulting parties under Section 106 to identify and.

191

00:36:41.220 --> 00:36:55.380

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: resolve any potential adverse effects so collectively, then the EIS makes it makes a determination that there would be no disproportionately high or adverse impacts to environmental justice population.

192

00:36:57.570 --> 00:37:00.930

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: I think that's my last slide, so I will turn it back to you Meg.

193

00:37:02.940 --> 00:37:06.870

Meg Perry | SWCA: Thank you Kristen and Sue for your presentation.

194

00:37:07.980 --> 00:37:19.380

Meg Perry | SWCA: we're going to turn in just a moment to questions and comments from our participants, and let me just give everyone a reminder, about how to submit your questions and comments.

195

00:37:21.330 --> 00:37:30.330

Meg Perry | SWCA: So you can submit a written question using the Q&A button in Zoom that is this little two bubbles Q&A icon here.

196

00:37:31.980 --> 00:37:38.580

Meg Perry | SWCA: And you can type your question in there and hit send and then we'll respond to that live and then.

197

00:37:39.450 --> 00:37:44.460

Meg Perry | SWCA: If you would like to share a question verbally with us, you can click the raise hand button which.

198

00:37:45.090 --> 00:37:50.520

Meg Perry | SWCA: You will see under reactions or under participants in Zoom depending which version, you have.

199

00:37:51.120 --> 00:38:02.370

Meg Perry | SWCA: I don't think we have anybody joining us by phone, but if for any reason, you have to drop off and call back in you can use star nine to raise your hand if you're called in on the phone instead of in Zoom.

200

00:38:03.390 --> 00:38:10.770

Meg Perry | SWCA: And we'll see those raise hands pop up in the order that you raise them and we'll just call on folks in one by one.

201

00:38:13.110 --> 00:38:17.730

Meg Perry | SWCA: So with that I'll open it up to any questions and comments and just note that.

202

00:38:19.200 --> 00:38:25.170

Meg Perry | SWCA: The comments will be documented in the formal project record has comments on the draft environmental impact statement.

203

00:38:25.590 --> 00:38:40.890

Meg Perry | SWCA: And questions will be addressed live and captured as part of the meeting summary for this meeting, but they will be formally recorded as comments on the draft environmental impact statement, but really intended to be clarifications to help you in preparing your your any comments.

204

00:38:41.970 --> 00:38:46.350

Meg Perry | SWCA: So with that I'll open it up to any questions or comments from our participants.

205

00:38:57.210 --> 00:39:01.050

Meg Perry | SWCA: And we threw a lot at you so give you a minute to kind of think a little bit if you need to.

206

00:39:35.700 --> 00:39:40.350

Meg Perry | SWCA: And I know we did have a question early on in the presentation about whether the slides.

207

00:39:41.310 --> 00:39:58.290

Meg Perry | SWCA: That we just presented are available, and the answer is, they are they're already up on the project website so that link that you see in the chat I think that should be visible to everyone, but I'll just put it in one more time in case it popped in before you joined us.

208

00:40:00.240 --> 00:40:10.860

Meg Perry | SWCA: But you should see that in the chat and the slides are available on that website, along with all sorts of other useful background information on the project, including the draft environmental impact statement document.

209

00:40:33.180 --> 00:40:44.010

Meg Perry | SWCA: I'm not seeing any questions or comments at the moment, if you are if you're having Zoom troubles feel free to in the Q&A to let us know, and we can try to troubleshoot there.

210

00:40:49.980 --> 00:40:57.210

Meg Perry | SWCA: Otherwise we'll just keep the line open for another few minutes for anyone who might have a question or comment arise.

211

00:41:16.950 --> 00:41:22.620

Meg Perry | SWCA: Maybe I'll just show folks briefly what that project website looks like so you're familiar with it.

212

00:41:29.100 --> 00:41:37.860

Meg Perry | SWCA: So hopefully, you're seeing that website on your screen, so it has information about the meeting today and tomorrow if you'd like to join us, then the.

213

00:41:38.610 --> 00:41:50.910

Meg Perry | SWCA: materials, as I mentioned the PowerPoint from today's meeting is there for you to view and then there's information from the scoping meeting that was held in March, if you'd like to look back at that information.

214

00:41:53.100 --> 00:42:04.380

Meg Perry | SWCA: And then the draft environmental impact statement for public comment is there that fourth link down at the bottom, as well as these other associated documents.

215

00:42:30.000 --> 00:42:41.340

Meg Perry | SWCA: Great well really appreciate everyone's time and attention today I'm not seeing any questions or comments in the Q&A or raised hands so.

216

00:42:42.810 --> 00:42:43.470

Meg Perry | SWCA: We are.

217

00:42:45.300 --> 00:42:52.080

Meg Perry | SWCA: Essentially adjourned unless any questions or comments come up, so we will be staying on to hear any questions or comments you might have.

218

00:42:53.520 --> 00:42:55.980

Meg Perry | SWCA: But if you've received the information you need today, then.

219

00:42:57.720 --> 00:43:03.270

Meg Perry | SWCA: you're welcome to head on, to the rest of your day, so thank you all very much for attending.

220

00:43:07.440 --> 00:43:09.870

Meg Perry | SWCA: And just as a reminder.

221

00:43:11.400 --> 00:43:20.070

Meg Perry | SWCA: Again, that email to comment by December 6 is Skeletoncreeksolarpubliccomments@usda.gov that's in the chat.

222

00:43:23.580 --> 00:43:24.240

Meg Perry | SWCA: And then.

223

00:43:26.340 --> 00:43:31.950

Meg Perry | SWCA: The next steps Kristen or Sue do you want to speak to next steps on the NEPA process.

224

00:43:39.390 --> 00:43:40.230

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: I can, yes.

225

00:43:40.800 --> 00:43:41.250

Sue Wilmot, SWCA: Or do you want.

226

00:43:46.770 --> 00:44:02.550

Kristen Bastis - RUS: yeah next steps will be integrating the comments that we get from the public and the consulting parties in the Section 106 process into the final EIS and making a decision.

227

00:44:04.710 --> 00:44:10.020

Kristen Bastis - RUS: And that will happen over the winter and into early spring.

228

00:44:15.690 --> 00:44:19.770

Meg Perry | SWCA: Great alright well we'll remain on in case questions or comments arise and.

229

00:44:20.370 --> 00:44:27.300

Meg Perry | SWCA: I'm certainly encourage you to let anyone, you know might be interested about joining tomorrow's meeting that that opportunity is available.