

Request for Comments
Carroll Electric Line Relocation

This project was scoped initially from October 21st 2011 through November 21st 2011 and is being scoped again in light of a recent court ruling (Sequoia ForestKeeper v. Tidwell, 11-cv-00679-LJO-DLB (E.D. Cal.)), the Forest Service will provide public notice, comment, and opportunity for administrative appeal for projects and activities documented with a “Decision Memo” (36 CFR 220.6(e)) until new instructions are issued by the Washington Office, or the Agency issues regulations addressing the Court’s ruling. Only those who provide comment or express interest in this proposal during this comment period will be eligible to appeal the decision pursuant to 36 CFR part 215 regulations.

The Big Piney Ranger District on the Ozark-St Francis National Forest is considering a request from Carroll Electric Cooperative Corporation (CECC) located in Berryville, Arkansas to amend their existing special use permit to allow them to relocate 2 line segments located on National Forest land in Newton County, Arkansas.

Due to recent incidents including the January 2009 ice storm, CECC has identified several problematic line segments. These particular lines not only leave CECC vulnerable to many service interruptions but pose safety concerns as well. Most of these line segments were constructed under different safety and construction standards than those which electric utilities are regulated by today. Terrain and location of these lines make them accessible only by foot or special type of heavy equipment, this increases response and restoration times and extends time needed for rescue if CECC personnel become injured while working in these areas.

Carroll Electric Cooperative Corporation proposes to relocate 2 line segments along existing roads not to exceed 30 feet in width. CECC expects this would decrease response and restoration time, improve the safety of their employees when working on those sections of line, improve reliability, and lower operating costs.

Additionally, if this amendment is allowed the 2 line segments currently in use would be completely removed. The abandoned corridors would be rehabilitated and allowed to naturally regenerate back to a forested condition. The relocated line segments are proposed to follow existing roads. The permit area for the transmission lines and the coinciding roads would be the same resulting in fewer managed corridors across National Forest land.

Project # 209.1 Shiloh Road approximately - 4.6 linear acres and 3.0 linear acres abandoned
Project # 292 Icedo Gap approximately - 3.2 linear acres and 1.6 linear acres abandoned

This proposal fits the following category;

Approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than 5 contiguous acres of land 36 CFR 220.6 (e)(3)

If no extraordinary circumstances are discovered during analysis of the area, this project would be categorically excluded from an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or Environmental Assessment (EA).

This notice requests project-specific information and comments regarding the activities proposed in this project and within the project area. I am particularly interested in identifying any extraordinary circumstances that may exist in the project area and/or any activity that when implemented would negatively affect the environment and/or its inhabitants.

To ensure your continued participation in this process, and to be eligible to appeal your comments must be project-specific and postmarked or received within 30 days beginning the day after publication of this notice in Russellville's *The Courier*. You may mail your comment(s) to Bruce C. Davenport, Big Piney Ranger District, 12000 SR 27, Hector, AR 72843. Verbal or hand-delivered written comments must be received during our normal business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Mon-Fri. Comments may be mailed electronically to our office, in a common digital format, at: comments-southern-ozark-stfrancis-bayou@fs.fed.us. Additional information may be obtained by contacting Mike Mulford at the Big Piney Ranger District office in Jasper, AR (phone #: 870-446-5122 x5136).