



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Forest  
Service

Okanogan -Wenatchee  
National Forest  
Wenatchee River Ranger District

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File Code: 1950-1

Date: May 19, 2016

Dear Wenatchee River Ranger District Neighbors and Interested Parties,

The Wenatchee River Ranger District of the Okanogan -Wenatchee National Forest is proposing to issue a special use permit to Chelan County Public Utility District #1 (CPUD) to continue the operation and maintenance of the McKenzie-Beverly 115 kV transmission line across the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest for a permit term of thirty years. This would also include the 1.03 mile section of the McKenzie-Leavenworth 115 kV transmission line within the same utility corridor (now both referred to singly as the McKenzie-Beverly transmission line). This project is implementing the Wenatchee NF Land and Resource Management Plan and is not authorized under HFRA, and is subject to subparts A and B.

#### Purpose and Need

The objective of the Forest Service in undertaking this environmental assessment is the consideration of an application for a special use permit from the CPUD to be issued by the Forest Service.

The purpose of the Forest Service is to evaluate the actions of the project proponent (CPUD) and to determine the effects of project implementation to a degree that allows the decision maker to determine the path forward in addressing an application for a special use permit. Additionally, the Forest Service will provide biological and physical environment information needed to provide a long-term program for proactive and systematic repair and maintenance activities along the McKenzie-Beverly transmission line. In addition, the intention of the Forest Service and the CPUD is to maintain the safety and integrity of the infrastructure of the transmission line, the environmental integrity of the forest setting in which it's located, and to provide a safe and reliable source of electricity to communities served by the transmission line.

The Need for the undertaking is to issue a current, long term permit outlining responsibilities with terms and conditions for the operation and maintenance of the transmission line. The Forest Service currently holds an expired permit for the CPUD to operate and maintain their infrastructure and has recently received an application for a new permit from CPUD.

The Forest Service needs the CPUD to apply for the re-issuance of a now expired special use permit following accomplishment of an environmental assessment to evaluate the environmental



impacts of their proposal to achieve the following:

- Maintenance and operational activities that predictable, routine and with minimal short and long term impacts
- Identify the minimum necessary access points to infrastructure requires by CPUD throughout the year, and to:
- Provide a plan for actions which lie outside the typical routine operation and maintenance standards

The CPUD needs the Forest Service to consider their application for a new special use permit to effect maintenance and improve operational conditions for management of the McKenzie-Beverly transmission line which lies on National Forest lands because:

- The CPUD needs the stable and predictable business environment of a current permit in which to base proposed actions for operation and maintenance of its transmission line
- The CPUD wishes to have those actions and access points identified for which it can continue routine actions and not evoke new environmental analyses before further actions can be taken (outside of emergency actions)

#### Proposed Action

The proposed action of issuing a thirty year special use permit to CPUD would outline within its terms and conditions, the routine vegetation treatments for transmission line clearance, access and administration of access, if necessary, to line infrastructure and the recognized and acknowledged typical and routine maintenance activities associated with repair, stabilization and replacement of transmission line structures and components. Examples of activities and treatments would include:

- hazard tree removal
- establish and maintain stable, low-growing plant communities within the right-of-way using excavators, helicopters, hand tools, chainsaws, and mowers
- the utilization of established Forest Service system roads, the use and administration of other access roads or access over snow in sensitive areas with no roads
- the use of boom trucks, trackhoes, backhoes, or other equipment to replace or repair individual poles, cross-arms, guy wires, insulators, and associated equipment or facilities

Maintenance work within National Forest lands will be scheduled and conducted to avoid and minimize potential impacts to fish and wildlife and their habitats. Mitigation measures and best management practices would be employed to minimize impacts to species and habitats.

#### Forest Plan Management Allocation

The Wenatchee National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1990), as amended include the following land-use allocations in the project area: UC-1 Utility Corridor, EW-1 Deer Winter Range, GF - General Forest, OG-1 and 2 Old-growth, RE1- Developed Recreation, ST-1

Scenic Travel - Retention, ST-2 Scenic Travel – Partial Retention, and WS-2 Recreational River as well as Matrix, Late Successional Reserve, Riparian Reserve and Administratively Withdrawn per the Northwest Forest Plan,

At this time I am initiating scoping and am interested in any comments or issues you may have concerning this action. Helpful comments will be directed to science, methodology, and/or concrete concerns or issues directly related to the proposed action, thereby establishing standing for objections following issuance of the Final EA and Draft Decision Notice. Comments should be sent to the above address and will be most useful to us if they are received by June 21, 2016. Comments by postal mail must be addressed to: District Ranger Jeffrey Rivera, Wenatchee River RD, 600 Sherbourne, Leavenworth, WA, 98826. Email should be sent to: [comments-pacificnorthwest-wenatchee-wrrd@fs.fed.us](mailto:comments-pacificnorthwest-wenatchee-wrrd@fs.fed.us). Comments received in response to this solicitation, which must include names and addresses of those who comment, for future consideration for objection, will be considered part of the public record on these proposed actions and will be available for public inspection. For more information about this project please contact Mick Mueller, Project Team Leader at (509) 548-2550. Thank you for your interest in the management of the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest.

Sincerely,

*/s/ Jeffrey A Rivera*

Jeffrey A. Rivera  
District Ranger

Date: 5/19/2016