Kathleen Merrill
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USDA Forest Service, Region 2
Objection Reviewing Officer, ATTN: Ken Tu
740 Simms St.
Golden, CO 80401

Proposed Project: Objection to the Teckla-Osage-Rapid City Transmission Line
Responsible Official: Craig Bobzien, Forest Supervisor, Black Hills National Forest; Dennis Jaeger, Forest Supervisor, Thunder Basin National Grassland; and Stephanie Connolly, District Manager, BLM High Plains District.

Black Hills National Forest – Hell Canyon Ranger District & Mystic Ranger District
Thunder Basin National Grassland – Douglas Ranger District

Subject: Objection to the Teckla-Osage-Rapid City Transmission Line

I have a strong opposition of the implementation and proposed route of Black Hills Power's (BHP) Teckla-Osage-Rapid City 230KV Transmission Line Project for the following reasons:

(1) BHP has not shown any cause of this power line to benefit to residents of either Wyoming or South Dakota; the benefit of this power line is for BHP and its shareholders profits, which should not be allowed as a use of federal land since its only for private gain.
(2) Disruption of prime wildlife habitat for the long-eared bat, snails, eagles, sage grouse, deer, elk, wild turkeys, bobcats, antelope, coyotes, Indian artifacts and fossils that make their home on the Black Hills National Forest and the Thunder Basin National Grasslands.
(3) Installation of the proposed power line will have significant effects on threatened and endangered species. The power line's route will affect the greater sage grouse, which is proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Cutting down trees for power line installation will also adversely impact the northern long eared bat, which is also proposed to be listed under the ESA.
(4) BHP is asking for 100 Foot right-of-away in the Black Hills National Forest, yet asking for 150 Foot right-of-away from private land owners, which clearly demonstrates BHP has no respect for private property ownership and is simply trying to grab up all the land that they can. Power Lines distract from the landscape beauty and value.
(5) Implementing a power line and right-of-away will introduce new weeds along the route with equipment and vehicles, leaving a large problem for both the national forest and private landowners to deal with.

(6) The reason BHP removed the power line that previously occupied the proposed route around 2005 was a lack of maintenance due to steep terrain. This problem will continue to exist and will be the cause of problems for both private landowners and the National Forest in the future. BHP's ongoing lack of maintenance of an existing power line was the root cause of a large wildfire in Wyoming in 2012, and a lack of maintenance of the proposed line will inevitably lead to other large wild fires in the future.

(7) The Public Utilities Commission of Wyoming put the permit process on hold for six months. The National Forest Service should be concerned Wyoming has not given a permit and wait for that process before they give a permit to cross it.

(8) A 230 KV Power Line has health risks for humans and wildlife which can cause major health issues for both that have to live close to it.

Suggested Remedies to resolve the objection:

A. Have existing power lines carry to capacity.

B. Look into a natural gas based power plant based around Rapid City that could acquire natural gas resources from North Dakota

I have comments published in the "Final Impact Statement – Volume 2 of the Teckla-Osage-Rapid City 230 KV Transmission Line Project".

Sincerely,

Kathleen Merrill

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