

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

Oglethorpe Power Corporation: Notice of Finding of No Significant Impact

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA

ACTION: Notice of Finding of No Significant Impact

PROJECT NAME: Effingham Energy Facility Combustion Turbine Upgrades Project

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) has made a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) with respect to a request from Oglethorpe Power Corporation for financing assistance from RUS to finance the implementation of control and mechanical changes at Oglethorpe Power Corporation's Effingham Energy Facility, an existing gas-fired combined-cycle power generating facility in Effingham County, Georgia.

FURTHER INFORMATION: For further information, contact: Ms. Suzanne Kopich, Environmental Protection Specialist, USDA/Rural Utilities Service, by phone at 202-961-8514, or e-mail at suzanne.kopich@usda.gov. A copy of the EA and FONSI may be viewed on the RUS project website: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/resources/environmental-studies/assessments>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Oglethorpe Power Corporation proposes to implement computer software modifications and mechanical upgrades of existing turbine equipment at the existing Effingham Energy Facility in Effingham County at coordinates 32.2789°N; 81.2856°W near Rincon, Georgia. The Effingham Energy Facility is owned by Oglethorpe Power Corporation. Control and mechanical changes at the facility will help Oglethorpe Power Corporation continue to provide reliable, efficient, and low-cost power to the 38 electric membership corporations who provide power to over 4 million Georgians.

The proposed action involves the implementation of two upgrades for the Effingham Energy Facility's two combustion turbines: the Advanced Gas Path upgrade, which will include additional hardware and computer software modifications that would improve electrical output and efficiency and extend the maintenance interval of the units, and the Low Load Turndown upgrade, which will allow the facility's gas turbines to continue to operate at reduced power during times of low demand with less frequent shutdowns and subsequent restarts once demand increases. The Advanced Gas Path upgrade will increase capacity at the existing facility and allow Oglethorpe Power Corporation to meet system demand with the facility operating rather than starting other units or purchasing power from others. The Low Load Turndown upgrade will lower maintenance costs, reduce start-up costs due to less frequent shut down of the facility, and improve the facility's overall operating efficiency. Both upgrades will involve modifications to existing equipment within the current facility structures and will not require new ground-disturbing activities or new facilities, equipment, or buildings to be constructed within or outside the current facility footprint. Alternatives considered by RUS and Oglethorpe Power Corporation include: No Action and the proposed project. The alternatives are discussed in the project 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 Effingham Herald newspaper on October 19, 2022. A 14-day comment period was announced in the newspaper notice. Copies of the Environmental Assessment and FONSI are available from RUS or at Oglethorpe Power Corporation headquarters at 2100 East Exchange Place, Tucker, Georgia 30084. No comments were received during the public comment period.

Based on its EA and commitments made by Oglethorpe Power Corporation, RUS has concluded that the project would have no significant impact (or impacts) 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 the federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat thereof. The proposed project would not disproportionately affect minority and/or low-income populations.

No other potential significance impacts resulting from the proposed project have been identified. Therefore, RUS has determined that this FONSI fulfils its obligations under the National Environmental Policy Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), 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 federal action would not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment, and as such will not prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for its action related to the proposed project.

Dated: December 23, 2022