**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**Rural Development**

Oglethorpe Power Corporation: Notice of Availability of an Environmental Assessment

**AGENCY**: Rural Utilities Service, USDA

**ACTION:** Notice of Availability of an Environmental Assessment for Public Review

**PROJECT NAME:** Washington County Energy Facility Dual Fuel Conversion Project

**SUMMARY:** The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) has issued an Environmental Assessment (EA) to meet its responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and RUS’s Environmental and Policies and Procedures (7 CFR Part 1970) in relation to possible impacts for a proposed project by Oglethorpe Power Corporation (Oglethorpe). Oglethorpe owns two existing natural gas-fired simple cycle combustion turbines (CTs) at the Washington County Energy Facility (Facility), located at 1177 County Line Road in Washington County near Sandersville, Georgia. The project involves converting Oglethorpe’s two CTs to have dual fuel firing capabilities with natural gas as the primary fuel and diesel fuel oil as the back-up fuel. Oglethorpe may request financial assistance from RUS for the project.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:** Suzanne Kopich, Environmental Protection Specialist, USDA, Rural Utilities Service via e-mail: [**suzanne.kopich@usda.gov**](mailto:suzanne.kopich@usda.gov). A copy of the EA may be viewed at the agency’s website: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/resources/environmental-studies/assessment/washington-county-energy-facility-dual-fuel-conversion-project> or physically at the Oglethorpe Headquarters at 2100 E Exchange Place, Tucker, GA 30084.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Oglethorpe proposes to install new infrastructure and mechanical and software upgrades at its existing Facility, a natural gas-fired simple-cycle power generating facility with two combustion turbines (CTs). The Facility is co-located with the Washington County Power, LLC, which also owns two natural gas-fired simple-cycle combustion turbines. Together, the entire power plant comprises a single site (Site) with all four CTs within the same fence line. The Dual Fuel Conversion Project (Project) would include converting Oglethorpe’s two existing simple-cycle natural gas CTs, Unit 2 (CT2) and Unit 3 (CT3), into dual fuel capable CTs. This dual fuel capability would allow CT2 and CT3 to run primarily on natural gas with diesel fuel oil as a back-up fuel. Converting the CTs with dual fuel capabilities would increase the resiliency and reliability of the Facility’s electrical output by allowing for a back-up fuel source during times of heavy loads when natural gas supply is curtailed or cut off.

This Project would result in increases in the maximum hourly rate of air emissions and expected annual air emissions. The Facility has obtained an *Air Quality – Part 70 Operating Permit Amendment* for the construction and operation of the Project. The permit specifies that Best Available Control Technology (BACT) is the use of dry low-nitrogen oxides (NOx ) combustors for periods of natural gas firing and water-injection systems for periods of fuel oil firing.

The Project will result in an increase in the water usage amounts for the Facility. However, the increases are expected to stay within the parameters of the current groundwater withdrawal and National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) discharge permits for the Site, and updates to these permits are not anticipated.

An EA that describes the Project in detail and discusses its anticipated environmental impacts was prepared by Oglethorpe and Burns & McDonnell Engineering Company, Inc. Consistent with 7 CFR §1970.5(b)(3)(iv)(C), RUS has completed an independent evaluation of the environmental information and analysis performed and accepted the documentation as the Agency’s EA for the proposed Project. No significant impacts are expected as a result of the Project.

Written questions and comments should be emailed to RUS at: [RUSPublicComments@usda.gov](mailto:RUSPublicComments@usda.gov). RUS will accept questions and comments on the EA for 14 days from the date of publication of this notice.

Any final action by RUS related to the proposed project will be subject to, and contingent upon, compliance with all relevant Federal environmental laws and regulations and completion of environmental review procedures as prescribed by 7 CFR Part 1970, Environmental Policies and Procedures.

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