

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFIANT IMPACT

**Kingdom City – Auxvasse 69KV Transmission Line
Auxvasse – Salt River 69KV Transmission Line
Salt River – Mexico 69KV Transmission Line
Mexico – Santa Fe 69KV Transmission Line
Callaway, Audrain and Monroe Counties, Missouri**

RURAL UTILITIES SERVICE

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Central Electric Power Cooperative

**Prepared by:
Engineering and Environmental Staff
Rural Utilities Service**

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A. INTRODUCTION

Central Electric Power Cooperative (Central) has submitted a financing request to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Rural Utilities Service (RUS) to rebuild the Kingdom City – Auxvasse, Auxvasse – Salt River, Salt River – Mexico and Mexico – Santa Fe 69kV transmission lines (Project) in Callaway, Audrain and Monroe counties, Missouri (MO). RUS is considering this financing request. Prior to taking a federal action (i.e., providing financial assistance), RUS is required to complete an environmental impact analysis in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) (U.S.C. 4231 et seq.), the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and RD's NEPA implementing regulations, Environmental Policies and Procedures (7 CFR Part 1970).

After completing an independent analysis of an environmental report prepared by Central, RUS concurred with its scope and content. In accordance with 7 CFR § 1970.102, RUS adopted the report and issued it as the Agency's Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed Project. RUS finds that the EA is consistent with federal regulations and meets the standards for an adequate assessment. Central published newspaper notices, announcing the availability of the EA for public review, in accordance with 7 CFR § 1970.102. In addition, RUS considers the proposed Project an undertaking subject to review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), 16 USC 470(f), and its implementing regulation, "Protection of Historic Properties" (36 CFR Part 800).

B. PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE/NEED

The overall purpose of the Project is to rebuild a transmission line built in the early 1950's that has reached the end of its useful life. The line has sustained woodpecker damage, split pole tops, wood crossarm degradation and corrosion of the metal components. The cumulative damage has, over 60 years, reduced the structural strength of the transmission line.

C. ALTERNATIVES EVALUATED

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, RUS would not provide financial assistance to Central, and/or the proposed Project would not be constructed. This alternative would not assist Central in continuing to provide reliable electric service to its members.

Propose Action Alternative (Preferred Action)

Under the Action Alternative, RUS would consider financing the proposed Project, and Central would rebuild the Kingdom City – Auxvasse, Auxvasse – Salt River, Salt River – Mexico and Mexico – Santa Fe 69kV transmission lines. The proposed project would rebuild 33.55 miles of 1950's vintage transmission lines on existing right-of-way.

Alternatives Eliminated from Further Consideration

In addition to the No Action Alternative and Action Alternative, Central considered other long-term maintenance alternatives, which are documented in the **Alternatives** section of the EA.

D. SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Land Use, Important Farmland and Formally Classified Lands: Central contacts the county commissions, regional planning authorities and the NRCS to evaluate the impact to land and land use. Little to no impact was identified by these agencies and no federally Classified Lands are being traversed. Central will use best practices to control erosion and restore the right-of-way to the previous state.

Wetlands, Flood Plains and Waters Resources: Central collaborated with the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (Corp), U.S. Fish and Wildlife and Missouri Department of Natural Resources to identify potentially impacted floodplains, wetlands and navigable waters. Central does not intend to place any structures in any locations identified and so no federal permitting will be required and impacts should be minimal. Should Central need to place a structure in one of these areas, further consultation will be required. Central will obtain any necessary state level disturbance permits and perform stormwater pollution prevention measures as applicable.

Biological Resources: Central coordinated with the USFW to determine and impacts to endangered species or other related impacts. The agency determined the Project activities should have “no effect”.

Cultural Resources and Historic Properties: Central consulted with the State Historic Preservation Office and Tribes. A Phase I cultural resource survey was conducted to identify any potentially important sites. Central does not plan any construction activities near any identified culturally important site. If any potentially important materials are discovered during construction, activities will be halted and further consultation will be required.

Other Considerations: Central also considered other factors such as socioeconomic, aesthetics, and human health and safety, among others. Since the project is a replacement of an existing electric transmission line, all potential impacts considered in these areas were found to be minimal.

E. PUBLIC AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

Local newspaper notices, announcing the availability of the EA, were published on February 2nd – February 19th, in the Fulton Sun (Fulton, MO), Mexico Ledger (Mexico, MO) and Monroe County Appeal (Paris, MO). A copy of the EA was available for review on the RUS environmental assessments website (<https://www.rd.usda.gov/resources/environmental-studies/assessments>).

The 14-day comment period ended on February 19th, 2022. The RUS website included project information in an easily accessible format (e.g., Section 508–compliant portable document format file [PDF]). RUS received no comments on the EA.

F. FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Based on its EA, RUS has concluded that the proposed Project would have no significant effects to the human environment. The proposed Project will have no effects on historic properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and no effects to federally listed species or designated critical habitat. The proposed Project would not disproportionately affect minority or low-income populations.

In accordance with 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 RD’s Environmental Policies and Procedures (7 CFR Part 1970), RUS has determined that the environmental impacts of the proposed Project have been adequately addressed and that no significant impacts to the quality of the human environment would result from construction and operation of the proposed Project. Any final action by RUS related to the proposed Project will be subject to, and contingent upon, compliance with all relevant federal and state environmental laws and regulations. Because RUS’s action will not result in significant impacts to the quality of the human environment, RUS will not prepare an Environmental Impact Statement for its potential federal action associated with the proposed Project.

G. RUS LOAN REVIEW AND RIGHT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW

This FONSI is not a decision on a loan application and therefore not an approval of the expenditure of federal funds. Issuance of the FONSI and its notices concludes RUS’s environmental review process. The ultimate decision on loan approval depends upon conclusion of this environmental review process in addition to financial and engineering reviews. Issuance of the FONSI and publication of notices will allow for these reviews to proceed. The decision to provide financial assistance also is subject to the availability of loan funds for the designated purpose in RUS’s budget. There are no provisions to appeal this decision (i.e., issuance of a FONSI). Legal challenges to the FONSI may be filed in Federal District Court under the Administrative Procedures Act.

H. APPROVAL

This Finding of No Significant Impact is effective upon signature.

Dated:

Authorized Signature

CHRISTOPHER A. McLEAN
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Electric Programs
Rural Utilities Service

For additional information on this FONSI and EA, go to:
<https://www.rd.usda.gov/resources/environmental-studies/assessments>, or contact Marcus Brundage at marcus.brundage@usda.gov.