

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Appalachian Power Company submitted an application to the Jefferson National Forests (the name changed in 1995) for authorization to construct a 765,000-volt electric transmission line across approximately twelve miles of the National Forest. Portions of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, the New River (at Bluestone Lake), and R.D. Bailey Lake Flowage Easement Land (at Guyandotte River) would also be crossed by the proposed transmission line.

Studies conducted by the Appalachian Power Company and submitted to the Virginia State Corporation Commission, as part of its application and approval process, indicate a need to reinforce its extra high voltage transmission system by the mid-to-late 1990s in order to maintain a reliable power supply for projected demands within its service territory in central and western Virginia and southern West Virginia.

A study to evaluate potential route locations for the proposed transmission line was prepared for the Appalachian Power Company through a contract with Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VPI) and West Virginia University (WVU). The information gathered by VPI and WVU, along with other information collected during the analysis process, will be utilized in the preparation of the environmental impact statement. General information about the transmission line route proposal is available from the Jefferson National Forest.

The decisions to be made following the environmental analysis are whether the Forest Service, the National Park Service, and the US Army Corps of Engineers will authorize Appalachian Power Company to cross the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, and the new River and R.D. Bailey Lake Flowage Easement Land, respectively, with the proposed 765,000-volt transmission line and, if so, under what conditions a crossing would be authorized.

In preparing the environmental impact statement a range of routing alternatives will be considered to meet the purpose and need for the proposed action. A no action alternative will also be analyzed. Under the no action alternative APCO would not be authorized to cross the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, the New River or R.D. Bailey Lake Flowage Easement Land. The alternatives developed by VPI and WVU will also be considered.

In July of 1994, the federal agencies identified a number of alternatives to the proposed action in the Virginia counties of Botetourt, Roanoke, Craig, Montgomery, Pulaski, Bland, and Giles and the West Virginia counties of Monroe, Summers, and Mercer.

The federal analysis will include an analysis of the effects of the proposed transmission line along the entire proposed route as well as all alternative routes which are considered in detail.

The significant issues identified for the federal analysis are listed below:

- The construction and maintenance of the 765kV transmission line and the associated access roads and right-of-way may (1) affect soil productivity by increasing soil compaction and erosion; (2) affect geologic resources (karst areas, Peters, Lewis, Potts Mountains, Arnolds Knob) and unique geologic features like caves through blasting, earthmoving or construction machinery operations; and (3) result in unstable structural conditions due to the placement of the towers.
- The construction and maintenance of the 765kV transmission line and the associated access roads and right-of-way may (1) degrade surface and ground water quality due to the application of herbicides; (2) degrade surface and ground water quality because of sedimentation resulting from soil disturbance and vegetation removal; (3) reduce the quantity of ground and spring water due to the disturbance of aquifers resulting from blasting, earthmoving or construction machinery operation; and (4) adversely affect the commercial use of ground and surface waters due to herbicide contamination and sedimentation.
- The construction and maintenance of the 765kV transmission line and the associated access roads and right-of-way may affect existing cultural resources, and historic structures and districts through the direct effects of the construction and maintenance activities and by changing the existing resource setting.
- The operation and maintenance of the 765kV transmission line and the associated access roads and right-of-way may adversely affect human health through (1) direct and indirect exposure to herbicides and (2) exposure to electromagnetic fields and induced voltage.
- The construction of the 765kV transmission line may adversely affect the safety of those operating aircraft at low altitudes or from airports located near the transmission line.
- The operation of the 765kV transmission line may (1) adversely affect communications by introducing a source of interference; (2) increase noise levels for those in close proximity to the line.
- The construction, operation and maintenance of the 765kV transmission line and the associated access roads and right-of-way may (1) adversely affect trails (including the Appalachian Trail) and trail facilities by facilitating vehicle access through new road construction and the upgrading of existing roads; and (2) reduce hiker safety by facilitating vehicle access to remote trail locations.
- The construction, operation and maintenance of the 765kV transmission line and the associated access roads and right-of-way may affect hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, boating and birding opportunities and experiences because (1) the setting in which these pursuits take place may be altered; and (2) the noise associated with the operation of the line may detract from the backcountry or recreation experience.
- The construction and operation of the 765kV transmission line and the associated access roads and right-of-way may affect local communities by (1) reducing the value of private lands adjacent to the line; (2) decreasing tax revenues due to the reductions in land value; and (3) influencing economic growth, industry siting, and employment.
- The construction, operation and maintenance of the 765kV transmission line and the associated access roads and right-of-way may (1) conflict with management direction contained in resource management plans and designations; (2) affect the uses that presently occur on and adjacent to the proposed right-of-way; (3) affect the wild, scenic and/or recreational qualities of the New River; (4) affect sensitive land uses like schools, churches, and community facilities; (5) affect the cultural attachment residents feel toward Peters Mountain; and (6) affect the scenic and/or recreational qualities of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (Appalachian Trail).
- The construction, operation and maintenance of the 765kV transmission line and the associated access roads and right-of-way may adversely affect the visual attributes of the area because the line, the associated right-of-way, and access roads may (1) alter the existing landscape; and (2) conflict with the