

regeneration harvest. There would be up to 57 miles of temporary road utilized for the project with approximately 20 miles of this occurring over existing road prisms. Road maintenance or reconstruction of existing system roads to meet forestry best management practices would be necessary to implement the proposed action. No new permanent roads will be constructed. Temporary roads not on the forest road system that are utilized will be obliterated (stabilized and or restored to natural contours) upon completion of treatment operations. Roads identified in the 2007 Travel Management Record of Decision that were removed from the road system (decommissioned) would be physically stabilized or re-contoured as needed to meet the resource objectives of travel management. Site-specific amendments to the Lewis and Clark National Forest Plan standards pertaining to elk hiding cover, elk winter range, and elk thermal cover may be necessary in order to meet the project's purpose and need. To address potential impacts of proposed management activities on cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) in meeting the project objectives, the proposal includes an integrated management approach to control the establishment and spread of this invasive grass species. The use of applicable EPA approved selective herbicides and or biological controls would be utilized in units having prescribed burning as the treatment action. Approximately 42 percent (29,498 acres) of the total project area is located within the Castles Mountains Inventoried Roadless Area (IRA). Proposed treatment activities on approximately 6,262 acres are planned within the IRA. A combination of non-commercial vegetation treatments and prescribed fire techniques are proposed. Under the proposal, road maintenance may occur but no road construction, reconstruction of system or temporary roads are planned within the IRA. The location of this project area is those sections of the Castle Mountains within the National Forest Boundary; Township 8 and 9 N, Range 8, 9 and 10 E. Principle Meridian, Meagher County, Montana.

Responsible Official

Helena and Lewis & Clark National Forests Forest Supervisor.

Nature of Decision To Be Made

The decisions to be made include: Whether to implement the proposed action or an alternative to the proposed action, what monitoring requirements would be appropriate to evaluate the implementation of this project, the

timing of the project and whether a forest plan site specific amendment (exemption) would be necessary as a result of the decision for this project.

Scoping Process

This notice of intent initiates the scoping process, which guides the development of the environmental impact statement. In February 2015, a scoping notice (flyer) will be mailed to interested and affected parties directing them to the project's information which will be posted to the Lewis and Clark National Forest's projects Web page (<http://www.fs.usda.gov/lcnf/>). The Web page will contain detailed project information, including when public meetings will be scheduled, project proposal maps, and other pertinent project information.

It is important that reviewers provide their comments at such times and in such manner that they are useful to the agency's preparation of the environmental impact statement. Therefore, comments should be provided prior to the close of the comment period and should clearly articulate the reviewer's concerns and contentions. The submission of timely and specific comments can affect a reviewer's ability to participate in the administrative objection process or any judicial review.

Dated: February 11, 2015.

Robin Strathy,

Deputy Forest Supervisor.

[FR Doc. 2015-03466 Filed 2-18-15; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

Information Collection Activity; Comment Request

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35, as amended), the Rural Utilities Service (RUS) invites comments on this information collection for which RUS intends to request approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by April 20, 2015.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas P. Dickson, Acting Director & Funds Control Officer, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, USDA Rural Development, 1400 Independence Ave. SW., STOP 1522,

Room 5164 South Building, Washington, DC 20250-1522. Telephone: (202) 690-4492. FAX: (202) 720-8435. Email: Thomas.Dickson@wdc.usda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) regulation (5 CFR part 1320) implementing provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) requires that interested members of the public and affected agencies have an opportunity to comment on information collection and recordkeeping activities (see 5 CFR 1320.8(d)). This notice identifies an information collection that RUS is submitting to OMB for extension.

Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the Agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the Agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to: Thomas P. Dickson, Acting Director, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Ave. SW., STOP 1522, Room 5164 South Building, Washington, DC 20250-1522. Telephone: (202) 690-4492, FAX: (202) 720-8435. Email: Thomas.Dickson@wdc.usda.gov.

Title: Substantially Underserved Trust Areas.

OMB Control Number: 0572-0147.

Type of Request: Revision of a currently approved information collection.

Abstract: The RUS provides loan, loan guarantee and grant programs for rural electric, water and waste, and telecommunications and broadband infrastructure. The SUTA initiative gives the Secretary of Agriculture certain discretionary authorities relating to financial assistance terms and conditions that can enhance the financing possibilities in areas that are underserved by certain RUS electric, water and waste, and telecommunications and broadband programs. The data covered by this

collection of information are those materials necessary to allow the agency to determine applicant and community eligibility and an explanation and documentation of the high need for the benefits of the SUTA provisions. Program specific application materials, which funds are being applied for, are covered by the information collection package for the specific RUS program.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 2 hours per response.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 2.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 1.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 4.

Copies of this information collection can be obtained from MaryPat Daskal, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, at (202) 720-7853, FAX: (202) 720-8435. Email: MaryPat.Daskal@wdc.usda.gov.

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for OMB approval. All comments will also become a matter of public record.

Dated: February 10, 2015.

Jasper Schneider,

Acting Administrator, Rural Utilities Service.

[FR Doc. 2015-03349 Filed 2-18-15; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

Basin Electric Power Cooperative: Notice of Extension of Public Comment Period for an Environmental Assessment

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of Extension of Public Comment Period for an Environmental Assessment.

SUMMARY: The Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is extending the public comment period for an Environmental Assessment (EA) related to a proposed project by Basin Electric Power Cooperative (Basin Electric). The Western Area Power Administration (Western) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) are cooperating agencies in preparation of the EA. The proposed Big Bend to Witten Transmission Line Project (proposed action) consists of an approximately 70-mile long 230-kV single-circuit transmission line, a new Western switchyard called Lower Brule Switchyard, an addition to the existing Witten Substation, and approximately two miles of 230-kV double-circuit transmission line between Big Bend

Dam and the new Lower Brule Switchyard. Communications facilities including a microwave relay tower and associated building will also be constructed at the Lower Brule Switchyard and Witten Substation. A portion of the proposed transmission line crosses Indian trust lands of the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, and the agencies have closely cooperated with the Tribe in preparation of the EA. Basin Electric is requesting RUS financial assistance for the proposed action. To ensure that parties interested in the proposed action are provided adequate opportunity for comment, notices are being reissued and the public comment period is being extended for 30 days.

DATES: A Notice of Availability of the Environmental Assessment was published in the **Federal Register** on January 28, 2015. Written comments on this notice must now be received on or before March 30, 2015.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: To obtain copies of the EA or for further information, contact Richard Fristik, Senior Environmental Protection Specialist, USDA, Rural Utilities Service, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Stop 1571, Washington, DC 20250-1571, telephone: (202) 720-5093, or email: richard.fristik@wdc.usda.gov; or, or Kevin L. Solie, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, Inc., 1717 East Interstate Avenue, Bismarck, ND 58503-0564, telephone: (701) 355-5495, or email: ksolie@bepc.com. A copy of the EA may be viewed on line at the Agency's Web site: http://www.rd.usda.gov/files/UWPBBigBendtoWitten_EA_Nov_2014_Final.pdf and at the following locations:

Rural Utilities Service, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Room 2240, Washington, DC 20250
Basin Electric Power Cooperative, 1717 East Interstate Ave., Bismarck, ND 58503-0564

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The network transmission system in South Dakota is not able to accommodate projected load growth in the next several years. This transmission line is proposed to strengthen the transmission network, improve transmission system reliability, and to help meet future demand for electricity and economic development in the region. In addition to increasing load serving ability for both Rosebud and West Central Electric Cooperatives, the Project would provide additional access to the regional high voltage transmission system. The proposed Big Bend to Witten line would enhance system reliability by providing an additional connection to the "grid" roughly midpoint along this east-west

line. If a portion of the Fort Randall to Martin 115-kV line would be damaged by a storm, the Big Bend to Witten line could provide power to the undamaged segments of the line. The proposed line also would provide a tap point for West Central near Reliance, which would enhance the reliability and stability of the West Central system. The tap point near Reliance would provide an additional power line to the Lower Brule Sioux Indian Reservation, which currently has only one older line, and would provide reliability and stability to power on the Reservation. In addition, future wind generation facilities may be able to interconnect to the proposed line to convey power to West Central's markets. Lastly, the Project lends itself to additional build-out in support of Western's long-range plan for a 230-kV system in southern South Dakota, and it would provide an increase in the load serving capacity such that the delivery needs of the projected network load can be met in a reliable manner.

Basin Electric is seeking financing from RUS for its ownership of the proposed project. Before making a decision to provide financing, RUS is required to conduct an environmental review under NEPA in accordance with RUS's Environmental Policies and Procedures (7 CFR part 1794). AECOM, an environmental consultant, prepared an EA for RUS that describes the project and assesses the proposed project's environmental impacts. RUS has conducted an independent evaluation of the EA and believes that it accurately assesses the impacts of the proposed project. No significant impacts are expected as a result of the construction of the project.

Any final action by RUS related to the proposed action will be subject to, and contingent upon, compliance with all relevant Federal, State, and local environmental laws and regulations and completion of the environmental review requirements as prescribed in RUS's Environmental Policies and Procedures at 7 CFR part 1794.

Richard Fristik,

Acting Director, Engineering and Environmental Staff, Rural Utilities Service.

[FR Doc. 2015-03385 Filed 2-18-15; 8:45 am]

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