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Date:

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Dear Interested Party

The Proposed Palomar Gasline Transmission Project (PGT) that is being evaluated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) crosses east/west through the middle of the Mt. Hood National Forest (Forest). The Forest Service is a cooperating agency on the environmental impact statement (EIS) that is being prepared by the FERC and we have identified aspects of the proposed pipeline that would not be consistent with the Mt. Hood National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). The purpose of this letter is to inform you we will be evaluating amendments to our Forest Plan in conjunction with the environmental analysis being conducted by FERC, and to request any input you may have.

Background

PGT has proposed constructing and operating a new natural gas pipeline and associated structures. The project would be located in northwest Oregon and consist of a 211-mile-long, 36-inch-diameter pipeline running from near Shaniko, Wasco County, Oregon to the Bradwood sendout pipeline in Clatsop County, Oregon (See attachment 1).

Approximately 47 miles of the pipeline would be located on the Forest (See attachment 2). The pipeline would enter the Forest near MP 42 and follow a westward route across the Forest just north of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation for approximately 13.2 miles. Between MP 48 and MP 49.9 the route would be adjacent to State Highway 216. The proposed route would continue in a southwest direction for approximately 3 miles and then continue west across the Forest until approximately MP 89.2. The proposed route would cross Late Successional Reserves (LSR) between MP 77 and MP 78 and between MP 88 and MP 89, directly affecting approximately 27 acres of LSR.

It would also cross through two 100 acre LSRs, directly affecting approximately 5 acres. The proposed route would directly affect approximately 709 acres of National Forest System land, approximately 106 acres of which would be old-growth forest. The proposed route would also cross the Clackamas River, a federally designated Wild and Scenic River.

Additional information on PGT's proposed facilities is available from the FERC Office of External Affairs at 1-866-208 FERC (3372) or on the FERC Internet website (<http://www.ferc.gov>) using the "eLibrary" link. Click on the eLibrary link, click on "General Search," and enter the docket number (PF07-13-000) excluding the last three digits in the Docket. Be sure you have selected an appropriate date range. For assistance, please contact FERC Online Support at FercOnlineSupport@ferc.gov or toll free at 1-866-208-3676, or for TTY, contact (202) 502-8659.



Also, PGT has established a web site for this project at <http://www.palomargas.com/project.html>. The website includes a project overview, timeline, safety and environmental information, and answers to frequently asked questions. You can also request additional information by emailing PGT directly at info@palomargas.com or writing to: Palomar Gas Transmission, 1400 SW Fifth Avenue, Suite 900, Portland, Oregon 97225.

Proposed Amendment to the Forest Plan

The staff of the FERC is preparing the EIS that will discuss the environmental impacts of the PGT project that could result from the construction and operation of a new underground natural gas pipeline. An initial Notice of Intent (NOI) for the proposed pipeline was issued by the FERC on October 29, 2007.

Section 372 of the 2005 Energy Policy Act directed the Secretary of Energy in consultation with the Secretaries of Agriculture, Interior and Defense to coordinate all applicable Federal authorizations and environmental reviews relating to a proposed or existing utility facility, including an agreement to prepare a single environmental review document to be used as the basis for all Federal authorization decisions. Assisting in the development of a single environmental analysis is also consistent with agency guidance for processing natural gas pipeline proposals (FSM 2726.34a). In light of this direction we will be including an analysis of a Forest Plan amendment in the EIS being prepared by the FERC.

The FERC is the lead federal agency in the preparation of the EIS, and is preparing the EIS to satisfy the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The FERC will use the EIS in its decision-making processes to determine whether or not to authorize the Project. The Forest Service will use the EIS to evaluate the proposed amendments to the Mt. Hood Forest Plan and for any forest plan amendment decisions made subsequently if FERC authorizes this project.

We have identified that there are aspects of the proposed pipeline that would not be consistent with our Forest Plan as amended by the Northwest Forest Plan. Specifically, the proposed project would not be consistent with Standards and Guidelines: for Late-Successional Reserves (LSRs) crossed by the proposed pipeline; for the Clackamas Wild and Scenic River (which prohibit construction of utility lines within any river segment); for Key Site Riparian Areas (where rights-of-way and easements are prohibited); for restricting the use of ground equipment for vegetation clearing on earth flow areas; for cumulative impacts for soil disturbance; and with Standards and Guidelines limiting disturbance in riparian areas. In addition, the Project may not be consistent with visual quality objectives (VQOs) for the following:

- Eligible Wild, Scenic, and Recreational River Corridors Sensitivity Level I trails with a VQO of Retention, Partial Retention, and Modification in the near foreground, far foreground, and middleground, respectively
- Sensitivity Level II trails with a VQO of Partial Retention, Modification, and Modification in the near foreground, far foreground, and middleground, respectively

- Portions of the Forest with Retention and Partial Retention VQOs
- Designated Viewsheds (listed on Table Four-23 of the Forest Plan)

The proposed amendment of the Forest Plan would include land use designation adjustments to add acres to the LSRs in order to offset LSR acres that would be impacted by the project. The amendment would also include modifications to the text of the Standard and Guidelines mentioned above to account for the construction of the pipeline.

Scoping Process

The Mt. Hood National Forest is now seeking public comments on the scope of the analysis related to the proposed amendments to the Forest Plan that should be addressed in the EIS. All comments received will be considered in our preparation of a forest plan amendment. Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be part of the public record for this proposed amendment.

Comments should be provided prior to the close of the comment period and should clearly articulate any concerns and contentions you may have. Your comments should focus on the potential changes in the goods and services that the Mt. Hood National Forest produces, reasonable alternatives, and measures to avoid or lessen any adverse changes in the goods and services produced by the Forest. The more specific your comments, the more useful they will be. The submission of timely and specific comments can affect a reviewer's ability to participate in subsequent administrative appeal or judicial review.

We would like to have your scoping comments by **January 5, 2009**. Please submit written comments to: Mike Redmond, Mt. Hood National Forest, 16400 Champion Way, Sandy OR 97055. Electronic comments can be submitted to: comments-pacificnorthwest-mthood@fs.fed.us

All those who comment will remain on our mailing list and receive any future updates on this proposed forest plan amendment. Electronic Maps and other information about the proposed forest plan amendment are available on our website at: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/mthood> in the projects and plans section. If you have any questions on this proposal please contact project coordinator Mike Redmond at (503) 668-1776 or mredmond@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,



GARY L. LARSEN
Forest Supervisor

Attachments