

transmission lines to interconnect with two existing Western transmission lines. Two 6-mile parallel lines will connect the plant with the Davis-Prescott 230-kV line about 6 miles north of the proposed plant site and about 5 miles southwest of Kingman, and a 28-mile line would connect the plant with the Mead-Liberty 345-kV transmission line about 15 miles east of Kingman. These interconnections would integrate the power generated by the Project into the Western electrical grid. Western proposes to build these lines parallel to existing transmission lines or approved corridors. Since this would connect power from new generation to Western's system, DOE's NEPA Implementing Procedures require Western to prepare an EIS on the potential environmental impacts of this proposal. Western, therefore, will be the lead Federal Agency, as defined at 40 CFR 1501.5.

Western will carefully examine public health and safety, environmental impacts, and engineering aspects of the proposed power project, including all related facilities, such as the power plant and electric transmission and natural gas lines.

The EIS will be prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Council of Environmental Quality's NEPA Implementing Regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508) and DOE's NEPA Implementing Procedures (10 CFR 1021). Western will invite local and State agencies with jurisdiction over the Project to be cooperating agencies on the EIS. Full public participation and disclosure are planned for the entire EIS process. It is anticipated that the EIS process will take 8 months and will include a public information and scoping meeting; consultation and involvement with appropriate Federal, State, local, and tribal government agencies; public review and hearings on the published draft EIS; a published final EIS; a review period; and publication of a record of decision (ROD). A public information and scoping meeting will be held on April 20, 1998. Publication of the ROD is anticipated in the fall of 1998.

Dated: March 23, 1998.

**Michael S. HacsKaylo,**

*Acting Administrator.*

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## DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

### Western Area Power Administration

#### Pacific Northwest-Pacific Southwest Intertie Project—Point-to-Point Transmission Services Rates for the 230/345-kV Transmission System

**AGENCY:** Western Area Power Administration, DOE.

**ACTION:** Notice of proposed rate adjustments.

**SUMMARY:** The Western Area Power Administration's (Western) Desert Southwest Region (DSW) is initiating a rate adjustment process for point-to-point transmission services on the 230/345-kV system of the Pacific Northwest-Pacific Southwest Intertie Project (AC Intertie). This action is necessary to recover annual costs (including interest expense) and capital requirements. The existing rate schedule was placed into effect on February 1, 1996, under Rate Order WAPA-71 which was approved on a final basis by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on July 24, 1996.

The proposed rate and its impact are explained in greater detail in a rate brochure which will be made available to all interested parties. Network transmission services and ancillary services which comply with FERC Order Nos. 888 and 888a may be obtained through Western's Open Access Tariff published on January 6, 1998 (63 FR 521).

The proposed rate is scheduled to go into effect on October 1, 1998. This **Federal Register** notice initiates the formal process for the proposed rate.

**DATES:** Submit comments on or before July 2, 1998. The forum dates are:

1. Public information forum, May 4, 1998, 10 a.m. MST, Phoenix, Arizona.
2. Public comment forum, June 1, 1998, 10 a.m. MST, Phoenix, Arizona.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments should be sent to Mr. J. Tyler Carlson, Regional Manager, Desert Southwest Customer Service Region, Western Area Power Administration, P.O. Box 6457, Phoenix, AZ 85005-6457. The public forums will be held at the Desert Southwest Regional Office, 615 South 43rd Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mr. Maher A. Nasir, Rates Team Lead, Desert Southwest Customer Service Region, Western Area Power Administration, P.O. Box 6457, Phoenix, AZ 85005-6457, telephone (602) 352-2768.

## SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

### Proposed AC Intertie Transmission Rate

The proposed firm transmission service rate for the AC Intertie 230/345-kV transmission system is \$12.00 per kilowattyear (kWyr). The existing rate is \$6.58 per kWyr. The proposed rate represents an 82-percent increase. The increase in the rate is necessary to demonstrate repayment for the 230/345-kV transmission system and the 500-kV transmission system. Looking at the AC Intertie as a whole, two primary issues have prompted the proposed rate. First, costs from the planning phase of the canceled Northwest portion of the project must be repaid. In 1969, the Department of the Interior discontinued its funding prior to completion. When the Pacific Northwest participants subsequently withdrew support, a decision was made to abandon the project. The proposed transmission rate accounts for the recovery of the abandoned project costs.

The second issue is revenue from firm transmission service on the 500-kV transmission system is less than projected. Western has estimated that it will take approximately 10 years for the 500-kV transmission system to be subscribed to a level sufficient to meet revenue repayment requirements. Western's AC Intertie Power Repayment Study (PRS) reflects a revenue contribution for the 500-kV transmission system equivalent to the sale of 62.5 megawatts (MW) during the first year, increased by 100 MW each year during the 10-year period. The study concludes that the proposed rate for firm transmission service on the 230/345-kV AC Intertie transmission system is necessary to meet repayment requirements of the AC Intertie Project over this 10-year period.

Western proposes, through this rate adjustment process, to supersede only the rate for firm point-to-point transmission service on the 230/345-kV system placed in effect under Rate Order WAPA-71. The rate for firm point-to-point transmission service on the 230/345-kV system includes the cost for the scheduling, system control and dispatch service.

### Authorities

Since the proposed rates constitute a major rate adjustment as defined in 10 CFR 903.2, both a public information forum and a public comment forum will be held. After review of public comments, Western will recommend the proposed rates or revised proposed rates for approval on an interim basis by the Deputy Secretary of DOE.

The proposed point-to-point transmission service rates for the 230/345-kV AC Intertie system are being established pursuant to the Department of Energy Organization Act (42 U.S.C. 7101, *et seq.*) and the Reclamation Act of 1902 (43 U.S.C. 371, *et seq.*), as amended and supplemented by subsequent enactments, particularly section 9(c) of the Reclamation Project Act of 1939 (43 U.S.C. 485h(c)) and section 8 of the Act of August 31, 1964 (16 U.S.C. 837g).

By Amendment No. 3 to Delegation Order No. 0204-108, published November 10, 1993 (58 FR 59716), the Secretary of Energy delegated (1) the authority to develop long-term power and transmission rates on a nonexclusive basis to the Administrator of Western; (2) the authority to confirm, approve, and place such rates in effect on an interim basis to the Deputy Secretary; and (3) the authority to confirm, approve, and place into effect on a final basis, to remand, or to disapprove such rates to the FERC. Existing DOE procedures for public participation in power rate adjustments (10 CFR Part 903) became effective on September 18, 1985 (50 FR 37835).

#### Regulatory Procedure Requirements

##### Regulatory Flexibility Analysis

The Regulatory Flexibility Act of 1980, 5 U.S.C. 601-612, requires Federal agencies to perform a regulatory flexibility analysis if a proposed rule is likely to have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities. Western has determined that this action relates to rates or services offered by Western and therefore, is not a rule within the purview of the Act.

##### Environmental Compliance

In compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. 4321, *et seq.*; Council On Environmental Quality Regulations, 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508; and DOE NEPA Regulations, 10 CFR Part 1021, Western has determined that this action is categorically excluded from the preparation of an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement.

##### Determination Under Executive Order 12866

Western has an exemption from centralized regulatory review under Executive Order 12866; accordingly, no clearance of this notice by the Office of Management and Budget is required.

##### Availability of Information

All brochures, studies, comments, letters, memorandums, and other

documents made or kept by Western for the purpose of developing the proposed rates will be made available for inspection and copying at Western's Desert Southwest Regional Office, 615 South 43rd Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona.

Dated: March 25, 1998.

**Michael S. HacsKaylo,**

*Acting Administrator.*

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#### ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[FRH-5990-5]

##### Agency Information Collection Activities: Proposed Collection; Comment Request; Environmental Information Customer Survey

**AGENCY:** Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** In compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. 3501 *et seq.*), this document announces that EPA is planning to submit the following proposed Information Collection Request (ICR) to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB): *Environmental Information Customer Survey*: EPA ICR No. 1853.01. Before submitting the ICR to OMB for review and approval, EPA is soliciting public comment on specific aspects of the proposed information collection as described below.

**DATES:** Comments must be submitted on or before *May 27, 1998*.

**ADDRESSES:** Office of Policy, Planning and Evaluation, U.S. EPA, Mailcode 2164, 401 M Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20460. Information regarding this information collection request can be obtained by contacting the information contact listed below.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Heather Anne Case, telephone: (202) 260-2360, fax: (202) 260-4903, case.heather@epamail.epa.gov.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Affected entities: Entities potentially affected by this action are those members of the general public who agree to participate in these voluntary, information collection activities.

Title: *Environmental Information Customer Survey*; EPA ICR No.: 1853.01.

**Abstract:** This information collection request covers a series of general public surveys to be administered by the EPA's Center for Environmental Information Statistics (CEIS) and the Environmental Monitoring for Public Access and

Community Tracking (EMPACT) program over the next three years. The objectives of these survey activities are derived from EPA's *Strategic Plan* (EPA/190-E-97-002, September, 1997) which sets a national goal to improve public access to the Agency's environmental information resources. The proposed information collection activities will assist EPA to: (1) Identify and characterize segments of the Agency's information customer base (information users and audiences), and (2) assess their environmental information needs and access preferences. A customer's "environmental information need" refers to specific types of data and information, such as data on air pollution levels or information about the known health effects of a particular pollutant. An "access preference" refers to the various ways in which the public can obtain data and information (e.g., reading newspapers or reports, by telephone, using Internet Web sites, visiting EPA libraries).

The CEIS and the EMPACT program are proposing to undertake, two, near-term, national telephone surveys of the public's environmental information needs and access preferences, to assure that early program development involves all interested information users. The results of these two survey activities will be used to: (1) Improve public access to data and information; (2) identify gaps between the public's environmental information needs and currently available Agency information resources; (3) develop new environmental information products and services; (4) enhance community-level, environmental measurement and monitoring capabilities; and, (5) regularly seek customers comments on their level of satisfaction with information products and services. The CEIS and the EMPACT program further propose to carry out several additional, customer survey activities to continue customer involvement in developing new projects, products and services.

##### Background Information

In February 1997, EPA announced plans to create a Center for Environmental Information and Statistics (CEIS). The Center was given the responsibility to provide the public a convenient, reliable, source of information on environmental quality status and trends. The CEIS is part of a broader, Agencywide effort to improve public access to EPA's information resources. Improved public access will provide citizens the information that they need to protect public health and the environment in their communities. CEIS drafted a plan for surveying the