

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

January 5, 2007

Mr. John Holt
Environmental Manager
Desert Southwest Customer Service Region
Western Area Power Administration
U.S. Department of Energy
P.O. Box 6457
Phoenix, AZ 85005

Subject: Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the San Luis Rio
Colorado Project, Yuma County, AZ (CEQ# 20060455)

Dear Mr. Holt:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the DEIS referenced above. Our review is pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act. Our comments are provided in accordance with the EPA specific extension to the comment deadline date from December 26, 2006 to January 5, 2007 granted by you on December 13, 2006 (e-mail request and approval exchange between Laura Fujii, Region 9 EPA, and John Holt, Environmental Manager, WAPA).

North Branch Resources, LLC and Generadora Del Desierto, S.A. de C.V. (Applicants) have requested a Presidential permit and interconnection approvals for a 26-mile 500-kV transmission line from their proposed San Luis Rio Colorado (SLRC) Power Center in Sonora, Mexico, one mile south of the United States-Mexico border, to the Western Area Power Administration's Gila Substation and Arizona Public Service Company's North Gila Substation near Yuma, Arizona (Proposed Action). The DEIS evaluates the Applicants' Proposed Action, a Route Alternative which would avoid potential land use conflicts, a 230-kV Alternative which would require a narrower Right-of-Way (ROW) and shorter structures, and a No Action Alternative.

Based upon our review and the Department of Energy's identification of the Route Alternative combined with the 230-kV Alternative as the preferred alternative, we have rated this DEIS as Lack of Objections (LO) (see enclosed "Summary of the EPA Rating System"). Our rating is based on recognition that the preferred alternative would require a narrower ROW and shorter and less massive structures, reducing impacts to habitat of the Flat-tailed Horned Lizard and other sensitive species, as well as visual

impacts (Chapter 2 Alternatives; Table S-3 Summary Comparison of Environmental Impacts).

Although the SLRC Power Center would be located in Mexico and not subject to NEPA requirements, the DEIS evaluates its potential environmental impacts within the United States (U.S.) that may result from its construction and operation (p. 36-41 and Appendix A). We commend the Applicants' commitment to build the SLRC Power Center to comply with applicable U.S. environmental standards, in addition to the standards of Mexico's Instituto National de Ecologia (p. 40). We support the implementation of advanced air emission control technology, a wet-dry cooling system, and use of water from the San Luis Rio Colorado municipal wastewater treatment plant for cooling water.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this DEIS. When the FEIS is released for public review, please send two copies to the address above (mail code: CED-2). If you have any questions, please contact me at 415-977-4184 or Laura Fujii, the lead reviewer for this project, at 415-972-3852 or fujii.laura@epa.gov

Sincerely,

/s/

Paula Bisson, Manager
Environmental Review Office

Enclosure: Summary of EPA's Rating Definitions