

The proposed intertie would lie within a corridor identified during an earlier feasibility study as the "preferred site" of the transmission line. The corridor is approximately 57 miles long and one mile wide and lies almost entirely on National Forest System land (Tongass National Forest) administered by the U.S. Forest Service. The corridor follows lower elevations to minimize visual impacts, avoid steep and unstable areas, and avoid extreme weather conditions. A 200-foot-wide right-of-way would be cleared for the transmission line. The line would require long aerial crossings at Eagle Bay, Bell Arm, the Behm Canal, and Shrimp Bay with span lengths of approximately 2,000, 1,200, 4,000, and 2,000 feet, respectively. There are variations of portions of the preferred route in the vicinity of Orchard Lake, Behm Canal, and Eagle Lake and River.

DATES: Comments concerning the scope of this project should be received by March 7, 1995. Public scoping meetings are scheduled during this comment period in Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg, and Juneau. The location and time of the meetings will be announced in the local media.

ADDRESSES: Send written comments and suggestions concerning the scope of this project to Linn W. Shipley, Acting District Ranger, Tongass National Forest, Ketchikan Ranger District, Attn: Swan Lake-Lake Tyee EIS, 3031 Tongass Avenue, Ketchikan, AK 99901.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Questions about the proposal and the EIS should be directed to Becky Cross, EIS Liaison, Tongass National Forest, Ketchikan Ranger District, 3031 Tongass Avenue, Ketchikan, Alaska 99901, Telephone (907) 225-2148.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Possible variations to the basic transmission line intertie include construction and use of an access road to serve the majority of the line from Eagle Bay to Carroll Inlet. The access road would not connect with any existing road and would not provide access between the project area and Ketchikan or another urban area. In addition to construction access, the road is intended to provide maintenance access to the transmission line. To the extent feasible, some portions of the road would follow the transmission line right-of-way for direct access to clearing and construction operations. The assumed road specifications are: a maximum grade of about 10 percent; a curve radius of about 100 feet; a shotrock surface about 14 feet wide and 24 to 30 inches deep; corrugated metal pipe culverts or small bridges to cross permanent and intermittently flowing

stream channels; and incorporation of any nearby logging roads or other vehicular trails into the access road where feasible.

An alternative to aerial crossings of large water bodies is use of submarine crossings of Bell Arm, the Behm Canal, and Shrimp Bay. The aerial conductors would connect to a terminal station or structure on the shore near the water body and continue as self-contained fluid-filled or dielectric cables underwater to the opposite shore, where they would pass through a terminal station to continue as aerial conductors.

To meet Ketchikan's energy needs, other alternatives which may be considered could include development of new power generation in the Ketchikan area and electrical load conservation measures. Finally, a no action alternative will be considered.

The EIS will be prepared under Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations governing third party contracts. Ketchikan Public Utilities, the project proponent, has contracted with Foster Wheeler Environmental Corporation, an environmental consulting firm based in Washington State, to conduct the field studies and environmental analyses, direct public involvement activities, and prepare the EIS for the project. The third party is the Forest Service, which will be the lead agency and which also is the deciding and permitting agency for the proposal. Linn Shipley, the Acting District Ranger of the Ketchikan Ranger District, must decide whether to issue a Special Use Permit to Ketchikan Public Utilities permitting the intertie to cross the Tongass National Forest. Foster Wheeler Environmental will be responsible to the Forest Service for preparing an EIS that meets NEPA regulations and Forest Service procedures.

Public participation will be an integral component of the study process and will be especially important at several junctures of the analysis. The first is during the scoping process. The Forest Service is seeking information, comments, and assistance from Federal, State, and local agencies, individuals, and organizations that may be interested in, or affected by, the proposed activities. The objectives of the scoping process are to (1) identify the affected public and agency concerns, and level of concern, (2) define the issues and alternatives that will be examined in detail in the EIS, (3) eliminate insignificant issues, and (4) identify analysis needs. In addition to the scoping meetings mentioned above, written scoping comments are being solicited through a scoping package that will be sent to those on the project

mailing list. For the Forest Service to best use the scoping input, comments should be received within 60 days of the publication of this Notice in the **Federal Register**. The following preliminary issues have been identified:

1. Will construction-related air emissions affect the air quality of the study area and Misty Fiords National Monument and Wilderness?

2. Will right-of-way clearing and road construction affect karst and cave resources?

3. Will activities associated with right-of-way clearing and road construction degrade fish habitat?

4. What are the possibilities for changing steam flow and creating barriers to fish migration?

5. What will be the effect of clearing wetland and riparian areas for the right-of-way and of encroachment and modification of floodplains and estuarine areas?

6. What are the implications of the proposed action on timber production and sensitive and rare plant species?

7. What are the potential effects of right-of-way clearing on windthrow?

8. How will the right-of-way clearing affect wildlife habitat, biodiversity, Habitat Conservation Areas, and rare and endangered species?

9. Will wildlife species used for subsistence harvest be affected by the transmission line and access road? If so, how? Will this affect subsistence lifestyles?

10. To what degree will the transmission line and access road affect the visual quality of key viewing areas, particularly at Orchard Lake and Eagle Lake, which have been mentioned as potential additions to the Wild and Scenic Rivers system?

11. To what degree will the transmission line and access road change the quality and type of recreation opportunities?

12. What are the economic implications for the cities of Wrangell and Petersburg?

Based on the results of scoping and agency consultation, alternatives to the proposed action, including a "no action" alternative, will be developed for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

A series of five public workshops will be held upon completion of the Preliminary Draft EIS. These workshops will be informal sessions designed to explain to the public the study process and preliminary findings, answer questions, and highlight any problems that might need resolving before issuing the DEIS. Their location, date, and time will be announced in the local media.