

Forest Service Purpose and Need
Excerpt from Antelope-Pardee Transmission Project Draft EIR/EIS
pp. A-12 through A-14.

A.3.3 USDA Forest Service: Purpose and Need

The proposed Project route traverses approximately 12.6 miles of NFS lands and would replace existing transmission facilities within an established utility corridor. SCE must obtain approval through a Special Use authorization from the Forest Service in order to construct, maintain, and operate the proposed Project on NFS lands.

Purpose of Action

Executive Order 13212 encourages increased production and transmission of energy in a safe and environmentally sound manner (CEQ, 2001). According to Executive Order 13212, for energy-related projects, agencies shall expedite their review of permits or take other actions as necessary to accelerate the completion of such projects. The agencies shall take such actions to the extent permitted by law and regulations and where appropriate.

The Forest Service's purposes (objectives) in authorizing the proposed Project are the following:

- Minimize adverse environmental effects to NFS lands, such as impacts to the following resources: visual, biological, cultural, air, soil, and water, among others as applicable (Forest Plan, Part 1, pp. 38 and 47; Part 2, pp. 7, 32, 35, 69, and 79);
- Minimize the effects of urbanization, or negative effects to open space and natural settings, on the Angeles National Forest (Forest Plan, Part 2, pp.35, 67-70);
- Ensure that future Forest management activities such as wildland fire fighting, among others, are not detrimentally affected by the location and/or design of the proposed Project (Region 5 Supplement FSM 2726.43; Forest Plan, Part 1, p. 19; Part 2, p. 37); and
- Ensure that the location of the transmission line on NFS lands maximizes the accommodation of future utility needs (Forest Plan, Part 2, p. 121; Part 3, p. 59).

The Forest Service may deny authorization for special uses for a number of different reasons, such as if "the proposed use would be inconsistent or incompatible with the purpose(s) for which the lands are managed, or with other uses," or the proposed use "would not be in the public interest" (36 CFR 251.5). In order to authorize SCE to occupy and use NFS lands for the proposed Project, the Forest Service must change incompatible management direction in the Forest Plan so that all actions occurring on NFS lands are consistent with the Forest Plan, per 36 CFR 219.10(e): "...the Forest Supervisor [must]...ensure that, subject to valid existing rights, all...instruments for occupancy and use...are consistent with the [forest] plan."

Need for Action

Pursuant to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976 (as amended), the Forest Service's need for action is to respond to an application from SCE for a Special Use authorization to construct, maintain, and use a transmission line (and ancillary improvements) through the Santa Clara/Mojave Rivers Ranger District of the ANF. The Forest Service will consider the application for use of NFS lands to ensure that the proposed Project is in the public interest and is appropriate based on the governing land management plan. The FLPMA provides the authority to the Secretary of Agriculture (Forest Service) to issue, renew, or grant authorizations to occupy, use, or traverse NFS lands for the generation, transmission, and distribution of electrical power (43 U.S.C. 1761). The proposed Project would interconnect and integrate energy generated in the Antelope Valley and Tehachapi areas into SCE's electrical system, including wind generation projects currently being planned or expected in the future.

The Forest Service is required (under 36 CFR 219.10) to review all site-specific projects, including authorized uses of the land, to ensure they are consistent with the 2005 Angeles National Forest Land Management Plan (“Forest Plan”), per the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) (16 U.S.C 1600-1614, as amended). A Special Use authorization cannot be issued to SCE without first ensuring its consistency with the Forest Plan (through improvement in design and/or Forest Plan amendment). Any proposed Forest Plan amendments pertaining to this Project will be included as part of the need for action and included in the appropriate alternatives analyzed in this document. The Forest Plan amendments must be completed before Special Use authorization(s) can be issued to the Applicant (SCE) for the proposed Project or a Project alternative. A description of the Forest Plan amendments required to approve the proposed Project are described in Section A.5.2 below. Necessary amendments to the Forest Plan will be made using the amendment process defined in the Forest Service Manual 1920 and Forest Service Handbook 1909.12, following all “appropriate public notification and satisfactory completion of NEPA procedures.” The decision by the Forest Service to approve or deny Forest Plan amendments associated with the proposed Project and each of the Project alternatives in this EIR/EIS will be based, in part, on the findings of the impact analyses reported in this EIR/EIS and also on the NFMA determination of the consistency of the proposed use with the parameters specified in the Forest Plan.

USDA Forest Service Purpose and Need Summary

The need for action by the USDA Forest Service is to respond to SCE’s application for a Special Use authorization to construct the proposed Project on NFS lands through the ANF and ensure the Project is in compliance with the Forest Plan. The purposes (objectives) are to minimize adverse impacts on NFS lands and minimize adverse impacts to forest management activities.