



PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: Southline Transmission Line Project

Project Type: ENERGY DEVELOPMENT, ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION, ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION, NEW LINES OR MAJOR RETROFIT

Latitude/Longitude (DMS): 32.295439 / -108.363354

County(s): DONA ANA; GRANT; HIDALGO; LUNA

Project Description: The Southline Transmission Line Project consists of two primary sections: 1) New Build and 2) Upgrade. The New Build section will include a new double-circuit 345-kilovolt (kV) transmission line that will start at the Afton Generating Station, located approximately 12 miles southwest of Las Cruces, New Mexico, and travels 219.4 miles west along a 200-foot-wide right-of-way (ROW) to the Apache Generating Station located nearly 12 miles to the southwest of Willcox, Arizona. For the Upgrade section, the existing Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) 115-kV transmission lines will be upgraded to a double-circuit 230-kV transmission lines from the Apache Generating Station that travels 56.2 miles west along a 150-foot-wide ROW to the Vail Substation in Tucson, Arizona. The project previously had a FEIS and BO; however, the project has changed some and has new ownership (Grid United is the current owner). Therefore, SWCA is investigating the need for reinitiation of Section 7 Consultation with the USFWS, including (1) if any new impacts to species previously conducted; (2) new effects to newly listed species and/or critical habitats; or (3) any new candidate, proposed species, or proposed critical habitats need to be addressed. The BLM is the lead federal agency on the New Build portion and WAPA is the lead federal agency on the Upgrade portion.

REQUESTOR INFORMATION

Project Organization:

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OVERALL STATUS

This report contains an initial list of recommendations regarding potential impacts to wildlife or wildlife habitats from the proposed project; see the Project Recommendations section below for further details. Your project proposal is being forwarded to a New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (Department) biologist for review to determine whether there are any additional recommendations regarding the proposed actions. A Department biologist will be in touch within 30 days if there are further recommendations regarding this project proposal.

About this report:

- This environmental review is based on the project description and location that was entered. The report must be updated if the project type, area, or operational components are modified.
- This is a preliminary environmental screening assessment and report. It is not a substitute for the potential wildlife knowledge gained by having a biologist conduct a field survey of the project area. Federal status and plant data are provided as a courtesy to users. The review is also not intended to replace consultation required under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), including impact analyses for federal resources from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) using their [Information for Planning and Consultation tool](#).
- This report contains information on wildlife species protected under the ESA and the [Wildlife Conservation Act \(WCA\)](#), [Species of Greatest Conservation Need \(SGCN\)](#), and Species of Economic and Recreational Importance (SERI). Species listed under the ESA are protected from take at the federal level and under the WCA are protected from take at the state level. SGCN are identified in the [State Wildlife Action Plan \(SWAP\) for New Mexico](#); all of these species are considered to be of conservation concern but not all of them are protected from take at the state or federal level. The harvest of all SERI is regulated at the state level. The Department has no authority to designate critical habitat for species listed under the WCA; only the USFWS can designate critical habitat for species listed under the ESA.
- The New Mexico Environmental Review Tool (ERT) utilizes species observation locations and species habitat suitability models, both of which are subject to ongoing change and refinement. Inclusion or omission of a species within a report cannot guarantee species presence or absence within your project area. To determine occurrence of any species listed in this report, or other wildlife that may be present within your project area, onsite surveys conducted by a qualified biologist during appropriate, species-specific survey timelines may be necessary.
- The Department encourages use of the ERT to modify proposed projects for avoidance, minimization, or mitigation of wildlife impacts. However, the ERT is not intended to be used in a repeatedly iterative fashion to adjust project attributes until a previously determined recommendation is generated. The ERT serves to assess impacts once project details are developed. The [New Mexico Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool](#), the data layers from which are included in the ERT, is the appropriate system for advising early-stage project planning and design to avoid areas of anticipated wildlife concerns and associated regulatory requirements.

Southline Transmission Line Project



CONANP, Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, Bureau of Land Management, EPA, NPS, USFWS
NHNM, USGS, USFS, US Census Bureau, NMDGF
Esri, USGS

Special Status Animal Species Potentially within 1 Miles of Project Area

Common Name	Scientific Name	USFWS (ESA)	NMDGF (WCA)	NMDGF SGCN/SERI	USFS	USFS SCC	BLM
Colorado River Toad	Incilius alvarius		T	SGCN			
Arizona Toad	Anaxyrus microscaphus			SGCN		USFS R3 SCC	BLM SENSITIVE
Boreal Chorus Frog	Pseudacris maculata			SGCN			
Barking Frog	Craugastor augusti			SGCN			
Plains Leopard Frog	Lithobates blairi			SGCN			BLM WATCH
Chiricahua Leopard Frog	Lithobates chiricahuensis	LT		SGCN	Sensitive Species		
Northern Leopard Frog	Lithobates pipiens			SGCN	Sensitive Species	USFS R3 SCC	BLM SENSITIVE
Lowland Leopard Frog	Lithobates yavapaiensis		E	SGCN	Sensitive Species		BLM WATCH
Eared Grebe	Podiceps nigricollis			SGCN			
American Bittern	Botaurus lentiginosus			SGCN			BLM WATCH
Common Black-Hawk	Buteogallus anthracinus		T	SGCN	Sensitive Species		BLM WATCH
Aplomado Falcon	Falco femoralis		E	SGCN			
Peregrine Falcon	Falco peregrinus		T	SGCN			BLM WATCH
Gould's Wild Turkey	Meleagris gallopavo mexicana		T	SGCN	Sensitive Species		BLM WATCH
Long-Billed Curlew	Numenius americanus			SGCN			BLM WATCH
Flammulated Owl	Otus flammeolus			SGCN			BLM WATCH
Whiskered Screech-Owl	Megascops trichopsis		T	SGCN	Sensitive Species		
Elf Owl	Micrathene whitneyi			SGCN			BLM WATCH
Western Burrowing Owl	Athene cunicularia hypugaea			SGCN	Sensitive Species	USFS R3 SCC	BLM SENSITIVE
Common Nighthawk	Chordeiles minor			SGCN			
Black Swift	Cypseloides niger			SGCN		USFS R3 SCC	
Broad-Billed Hummingbird	Cynanthus latirostris		T	SGCN	Sensitive Species		

Special Status Animal Species Potentially within 1 Miles of Project Area

Common Name	Scientific Name	USFWS (ESA)	NMDGF (WCA)	NMDGF SGCN/SERI	USFS	USFS SCC	BLM
Violet-Crowned Hummingbird	Amazilia violiceps		T	SGCN	Sensitive Species		
Lucifer Hummingbird	Calothorax lucifer		T	SGCN	Sensitive Species		
Costa's Hummingbird	Calypte costae		T	SGCN	Sensitive Species		
Elegant Trogon	Trogon elegans		E	SGCN	Sensitive Species		
Lewis's Woodpecker	Melanerpes lewis			SGCN		USFS R3 SCC	BLM WATCH
Gila Woodpecker	Melanerpes uropygialis		T	SGCN	Sensitive Species	USFS R3 SCC	
Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet	Camptostoma imberbe		E	SGCN	Sensitive Species		BLM WATCH
Thick-Billed Kingbird	Tyrannus crassirostris		E	SGCN	Sensitive Species		
Bank Swallow	Riparia riparia			SGCN			
Pinyon Jay	Gymnorhinus cyanocephalus			SGCN		USFS R3 SCC	BLM SENSITIVE
Pygmy Nuthatch	Sitta pygmaea			SGCN			
Western Bluebird	Sialia mexicana			SGCN			
Mountain Bluebird	Sialia currucoides			SGCN			
Bendire's Thrasher	Toxostoma bendirei			SGCN		USFS R3 SCC	BLM SENSITIVE
Sprague's Pipit	Anthus spragueii			SGCN			BLM SENSITIVE
Loggerhead Shrike	Lanius ludovicianus			SGCN		USFS R3 SCC	BLM WATCH
Bell's Vireo	Vireo bellii		T	SGCN			BLM SENSITIVE
Virginia's Warbler	Leiothlypis virginiae			SGCN			BLM SENSITIVE
Lucy's Warbler	Leiothlypis luciae			SGCN			BLM WATCH

Special Status Animal Species Potentially within 1 Miles of Project Area

Common Name	Scientific Name	USFWS (ESA)	NMDGF (WCA)	NMDGF SGCN/SERI	USFS	USFS SCC	BLM
Black-Throated Gray Warbler	Setophaga nigrescens			SGCN			BLM WATCH
Painted Redstart	Myioborus pictus			SGCN			
Botteri's Sparrow	Peucaea botterii			SGCN			BLM SENSITIVE
Black-Chinned Sparrow	Spizella atrogularis			SGCN			BLM WATCH
Vesper Sparrow	Poocetes gramineus			SGCN			
Baird's Sparrow	Ammodramus bairdii		T	SGCN	Sensitive Species		BLM SENSITIVE
Thick-billed Longspur	Rhynchophanes mccownii			SGCN			BLM SENSITIVE
Chestnut-Collared Longspur	Calcarius ornatus			SGCN			BLM SENSITIVE
Cassin's Finch	Haemorhous cassinii			SGCN			BLM WATCH
Evening Grosbeak	Coccothraustes vespertinus			SGCN			
Chihuahua Chub	Gila nigrescens	LT	E	SGCN			
Rio Grande Sucker	Catostomus plebeius			SGCN	Sensitive Species		BLM SENSITIVE
Mexican Long-Tongued Bat	Choeronycteris mexicana			SGCN	Sensitive Species		BLM SENSITIVE
Mexican Long-Nosed Bat	Leptonycteris nivalis	LE	E	SGCN			
Lesser Long-Nosed Bat	Leptonycteris verbabuenae	DL	T	SGCN		USFS R3 SCC	BLM SENSITIVE
Western Yellow Bat	Lasiurus xanthinus		T	SGCN	Sensitive Species		BLM SENSITIVE
Spotted Bat	Euderma maculatum		T	SGCN	Sensitive Species	USFS R3 SCC	BLM SENSITIVE
Pale Townsend's Big-Eared Bat	Corynorhinus townsendii pallescens			SGCN	Sensitive Species	USFS R3 SCC	BLM SENSITIVE
White-Sided Jackrabbit	Lepus callotis		T	SGCN			BLM SENSITIVE
Jaguar	Panthera onca	LE		SGCN			
Mountain Lion	Puma concolor			SERI			

Special Status Animal Species Potentially within 1 Miles of Project Area

Common Name	Scientific Name	USFWS (ESA)	NMDGF (WCA)	NMDGF SGCN/SERI	USFS	USFS SCC	BLM
Elk	Cervus canadensis			SERI			
Mule Deer	Odocoileus hemionus			SERI			
Pronghorn	Antilocapra americana			SERI			
Desert Bighorn Sheep	Ovis canadensis mexicana			SERI			
Sonoran Mud Turtle	Kinosternon sonoriense			SGCN			
Gila Monster	Heloderma suspectum		E	SGCN			BLM SENSITIVE
Bunch Grass Lizard	Sceloporus slevini		T	SGCN	Sensitive Species		BLM WATCH
Gray-checked Whiptail	Aspidoscelis tessellata		E	SGCN			BLM SENSITIVE
California Kingsnake	Lampropeltis californiae			SGCN			
Green Rat Snake	Senticolis triaspis		T	SGCN	Sensitive Species		
Rock Rattlesnake	Crotalus lepidus			SGCN			
Arizona Black Rattlesnake	Crotalus cerberus			SGCN			BLM WATCH
Desert Massasauga	Sistrurus catenatus edwardsii			SGCN			

Common Name hyperlink takes you to species account in [bison-m.org](https://www.bison-m.org/); Scientific Name hyperlink takes you to information in [NatureServe Explorer](#); ESA = Endangered Species Act, C = Candidate, LE = Listed Endangered, LT = Listed Threatened, XN = Non-essential Experimental Population, for other ESA codes see this [website](#); WCA = Wildlife Conservation Act, E = Endangered, T = Threatened; SERI = Species of Economic and Recreational Importance; SGCN = Species of Greatest Conservation Need; USFS = U.S. Forest Service, Sensitive Species = A species likely to occur on USFS lands that is of concern for a potential reduction in population viability; SCC = Species of Conservation Concern; BLM = Bureau of Land Management, BLM SENSITIVE = A species that occurs on BLM lands and whose viability is at risk, BLM WATCH = Species that may be added to the sensitive species list in future pending new information regarding species status.

Special Status Plant Species Potentially within 1 Miles of Project Area

Common Name	Scientific Name	USFWS (ESA)	NMAC	NMRPCS	USFS	USFS SCC	BLM
Sand Prickly-Pear	Opuntia arenaria		E	SS			BLM SENSITIVE
Night-Blooming Cereus	Peniocereus greggii var. greggii		E	SS			BLM SENSITIVE
Griffith's Saltbush	Atriplex griffithsii			SS			BLM WATCH

Special Status Plant Species Potentially within 1 Miles of Project Area

Common Name	Scientific Name	USFWS (ESA)	NMAC	NMRPCS	USFS	USFS SCC	BLM
Chihuahuah Scurfpea	Pediomelum pentaphyllum		E	SS	Sensitive Species		BLM SENSITIVE
Wright's Globemallow	Sphaeralcea wrightii			SS			

NMAC = New Mexico Administrative Code, E = Endangered; NMRPCS = [New Mexico Rare Plant Conservation Strategy](#), SS = NM Rare Plant Conservation Strategy Species; USFS = U.S. Forest Service, Sensitive Species = A species likely to occur on USFS lands that is of concern for a potential reduction in population viability; SCC = Species of Conservation Concern; BLM = Bureau of Land Management, BLM SENSITIVE = A species that occurs on BLM lands and whose viability is at risk, BLM WATCH = Species that may be added to the sensitive species list in future pending new information regarding species status.

Project Recommendations

The Department provides the following recommendations to minimize or eliminate impacts to wildlife.

[2003 Powerline Project Guidelines, updated February 2007](#)

[Trenching Guidelines, updated March 2022](#)

Major emphases of these guidelines include: 1) designing transmission lines to prevent or minimize risk of electrocution of raptors (See *Suggested Practices for Avian Protection on Power Lines: The State of the Art in 2006*) produced by the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC). A copy of this report may be downloaded from [APLIC](#); and 2) avoiding leaving trenches open during below-ground powerline construction to minimize injury to or death of wildlife.

The highly invasive, noxious weed African rue (*Peganum harmala*) has been documented near the proposed project area. African rue thrives on disturbed sites and along road sides. It is extremely drought-tolerant and will undergo rapid vegetative growth when soil moisture is available. African rue is extremely toxic to horses, sheep, cattle, and humans, containing at least four types of poisonous alkaloids. In addition, most parts of the plant contain allelopathic chemicals that will reduce the growth of surrounding native plants. To help control this species' spread, the Department recommends that any vehicles and equipment arriving on the project site be thoroughly cleaned of all visible dirt and mud to help contain and control the potential spread of weed seeds. The operator should also initiate a weed management program that includes a commitment to aggressive control of any African rue on the project site. For more information on potential control of African rue, see this [field guide](#).

Burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*) may occur within your project area. Burrowing owls are protected from take by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and under New Mexico state statute. Before any ground disturbing activities occur, the Department recommends that a preliminary burrowing owl survey be conducted by a qualified biologist using the Department's [Burrowing Owl Survey Protocol](#). Should burrowing owls be documented in the project area, please contact the Department or USFWS for further recommendations regarding relocation or avoidance of impacts.

The proposed project occurs near an important bat area. This area may contain important bat roosting resources, such as caves or mines, that potentially could be affected by certain project activities. Follow the guidelines below to minimize disturbance to roosting bats.

- Avoid use of pesticides, firearms, open-flame torches, or heavy smoke-producing equipment, especially from April through September.
- If artificial lighting is needed, use only light sources powered by batteries, or cyalume glow/light sticks. Keep the site clean by picking up refuse or materials from project lighting or operations whenever they are shut down.
- If the use of permanent outdoor lights cannot be avoided, design all outdoor lighting in accordance with the New Mexico Night Sky Protection Act, which requires that outdoor lighting be fitted with shielding that directs light downward, rather than upward or laterally, to prevent sky glow and associated impacts to bats.
- For any surface disturbing activities, the project footprint (including a 350 foot buffer) should avoid potential roost sites such as caves or mines, especially from April through July. Tree clearing activities and prescribed burns should include a minimum 0.5 miles buffer from any such features.
- If caves, mines, bridges, or other man-made structure suitable as potential bat roosts are encountered within the project area, they should not be entered during any time of year, and no roosting or hibernating bats should be contacted or disturbed. Report any dead or injured bats to the Department, which can facilitate contacts with other appropriate personnel.

Your project area intersects an Important Plant Area (IPA) that contains one or more species of plants listed as threatened or endangered by the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department (EMNRD) under New Mexico Statutes Annotated (NMSA) 75-6-1 or by the USFWS under the federal ESA. Although IPAs have no legal designation, they have been identified as areas that support either a high diversity of sensitive plant species or contain the last remaining locations of New Mexico's most endangered plants. The Department recommends that you consult with EMNRD's [Endangered Plant Program Coordinator](#) regarding any state-listed plants and the USFWS's [Information for Planning and Consultation \(IPAC\)](#) system for any federally-listed plants and reaching out to the appropriate federal species lead(s) with the [New Mexico Ecological Services Office of USFWS](#). The Department does not have any authority to designate or advise on state- or federally-listed plants.

Disclaimers regarding recommendations:

- The Department provides technical guidance to support the persistence of all protected species of native fish and wildlife, including game and nongame wildlife species. Species listed within this report include those that have been documented to occur within the project area, and others that may not have been documented but are projected to occur within the project vicinity.
- Recommendations are provided by the Department under the authority of § 17-1-5.1 New Mexico Statutes Annotated 1978, to provide "communication and consultation with federal and other state agencies, local governments and communities, private organizations and affected interests responsible for habitat, wilderness, recreation, water quality and environmental protection to ensure comprehensive conservation services for hunters, anglers and nonconsumptive wildlife users".
- The Department has no authority for management of plants or Important Plant Areas. The [New Mexico Endangered Plant Program](#), under the Energy, Minerals, and Natural Resources Department's Forestry Division, identifies and develops conservation measures necessary to ensure the survival of plant species within New Mexico. Plant status information is provided within this report as a courtesy to users. Recommendations provided within the ERT may not be sufficient to preclude impacts to rare or sensitive plants, unless conservation measures are identified in coordination with the Endangered Plant Program.
- Additional coordination and/or consultation may also be necessary under the federal ESA or National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Further site-specific mitigation recommendations may be proposed during ESA consultation and/or NEPA analyses or through coordination with affected federal agencies.