



## Community Development

Morgan Beryl, Director

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[www.eaglecounty.us](http://www.eaglecounty.us)

April 10, 2020

United States Forest Service  
Attn: Scott G. Fitzwilliams, Forest Supervisor  
900 Grand Avenue  
Glenwood Springs, CO 81601

[Via Email]

Re: Referral - USDA Forest Service Avon to Gilman Transmission Line Update

Mr. Fitzwilliams,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the planning process of the USDA Forest Service (the "USFS") Avon to Gilman Transmission Line Update. Eagle County is in support of supplying reliable and necessary power to our local communities in an environmentally responsible manner.

### **Planning Comments:**

The Eagle County Comprehensive Plan (the "ECCP") states in Section 3.7.6 Policies and Recommended Implementation Strategies for Wildlife Resources, "Wildlife-friendly measures should be incorporated into the design of individual homesites and neighborhoods." There is a recommended strategy in this same section to, "Position utility easements and open space areas within developments to facilitate wildlife movement," and "The quality, integrity and interconnected nature of critical wildlife habitat in Eagle County should be preserved." Eagle County encourages the USFS to address these policies within the proposed environmental analysis when it is conducted by the USFS.

The ECCP also states in Section 3.8 Sensitive Lands, "Development in Eagle County avoids or fully mitigates impacts to sensitive lands. Open space is preserved to the greatest degree possible, and scenic quality and cultural resources are protected." Within the narrative of this section, it states, "Public lands are viewed to be open space available for the recreational and scenic benefit of residents, second homeowners, and visitors of Eagle County." With an emphasis on scenic benefits, Eagle County requests the utility lines be located underground to diminish the impact of overhead powerlines to the scenic values within the valley as well as reduce fire risk.

The Eagle County Land Use Regulations state in Article 3, that utility transmission and distribution facilities in the Resource Presentation Zone District require a Special Use Permit approval prior to installation. However, because Holy Cross is an electric utility company, the Location and Extent process is an option per Colorado Revised Statutes. Eagle County encourages that one of these processes be utilized prior to the installation of the transmission line.

**Sustainable Communities Comments:**

Adding utility redundancy offers important benefits to our community and is consistent with Eagle County's Resiliency Plan. The Forest Service has identified the major areas of concern that should be further investigated through the development of an Environmental Assessment (the "EA"). Eagle County looks forward to reviewing the EA and resulting agency decision regarding whether to proceed with an Environmental Impact Statement or Finding of No Significant Impact. Eagle County supports the development of an EA and believes a detailed scientific evaluation of the proposed project is warranted, especially related to: 1) the potential impacts to wildlife; and 2) risk of wildfire.

Please contact me at (970) 328-8750, or at [morgan.beryl@eaglecounty.us](mailto:morgan.beryl@eaglecounty.us) if you have questions or would like to request a meeting to discuss these comments.

Sincerely,

Morgan Beryl [via email]  
Community Development Director

Cc: File