

MAR 07 REC'D

REGIONAL FORESTER'S OFFICE  
SOUTHWESTERN REGION

Forest Ranger Michniko Martin  
333 Broadway BLvd. SE  
Albuquerque, NM 81702

Dear Ranger Martin,

Please consider this letter as my objection to the Arizona Power Service (APS) installation of 2.5 miles of overhead high voltage transmission lines in the Village of Oak Creek, AZ. Such overhead lines are just wrong on several counts.

1 Much of this proposed line is being installed underground, going overhead for the last 2.5 miles seems to defy logic. If most of the line can go underground, why not the portion that presents the most danger, a residential area of 6,000 people that includes the only road into Sedona traveled by hundreds of thousands of tourists every week throughout the year.

- 1 **Overhead** high voltage transmission lines present a clear and present danger as evidenced by past and recent fires in California, Texas, Hawaii and elsewhere. I refer you to the New York Times March 22, 2024, article *Utility Caused Wildfires Are Becoming a National Problem*. The danger is well known, well publicized and completely avoidable. APS simply must bury the lines underground.
- 2 **Power** companies are aware of the problem as evidenced by APS lobbying the Arizona State Legislature to pass legislation that would absolve them of responsibility in case of a fire. APS would not be seeking such "it's not our fault" legislation unless they knew such a fire disaster was a real possibility, which they do.
- 3 **Arizona** and much of the western United States, including your region, is in the midst of severe drought and the havoc wrought by climate change. There was very little snow this winter, last year's monsoon was almost nonexistent, a pattern that has resulted in extremely high fire danger.
- 4 **The Forest Service** is experiencing the massive layoffs begun under the Trump Administration. Your own agency, which is responsible for fighting forest fires, is short staffed and seasonal fire crews may not be hired, further endangering people, towns and the forests, which are under your charge.
- 5 The homeowner insurance industry is influenced by all these factors. Large insurers such as Allstate and State Farm have left the California market. The rates charged by those insurers that remain are prohibitively high for thousands of homeowners. It doesn't take a crystal ball to see that people will leave threatened areas if they can't get or afford homeowners insurance. This result can and will have a negative effect on the fundamental economies of the states and a devastating effect on families.

- 6 **Power** companies defend their reliance on overhead lines by quoting the expense of underground. However, these same companies spend millions lobbying legislatures, supporting utility regulators and donating to political campaigns. I humbly suggest that the money spent on these activities would go a long way to pay for underground installations. Customers pay for the expansion of power capacity no matter if the lines are overhead or underground.

**Smokey the Bear has taught us that "Only You Can Prevent Forest Fires."**

This was never truer. Because Forest Ranger Martin, **you** are the only one who can prevent these future forest fires, And if the lines are installed overhead, fires will come. Underground installation prevents these fires.

As a resident of the Village of Oak Creek, which is within your region, I ask you to halt the installation of the overhead lines and require that the final 2.5 miles of lines be installed underground. Think about Smokey the Bear.

Thank you

Linda Allen

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