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Organization:

Title:

Comments: Scott Fitzwilliams,  
Forest Supervisor White River National Forest

Re: Holy Cross Energy Avon-to-Gilman 115-kV Transmission Line project

Mr. Fitzwilliams,

I am a long term resident and property owner in South Minturn. I am very concerned about the proposed Holy Cross Electric transmission line.

The US Forest Service's mission statement reads,

"The mission of the Forest Service is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations."

Looking to the future, we can only expect more severe drought in the West, and more severe storms nationwide. The potential risk of fire from above ground transmission lines is high, as we have so tragically seen in California. Entire communities in California have been decimated by wildfires started by power lines. The simple way to "meet the needs of present and future generations" is to bury the entire 9 miles of transmission line.

I understand the increased cost to HCE of burying the lines, but the decision of the USFS can't be based on corporate profits. Overhead transmission lines are a short sighted short cut, with a great potential for future disaster.

We are seeing this in real time in California where PG&E just agreed to bury 10,000 miles of existing power lines because of the wildfire danger. They are facing the cost of extreme drought which is now the new normal. The cost to bury the lines now is much less than the future cost of potential loss of life and property that a wildfire can cause.

It is time for Holy Cross and all power companies consider the long term effects of their actions. All transmission and power lines should be buried, and to build an overhead major transmission line at this time is tragically irresponsible.

On the USFS website, there is an entire page dedicated to Sustainability and Climate. One paragraph reads:

"The Forest Service is a steward of many of our Nation's most treasured landscapes, and within those landscapes are resources that people need and want, such as clean air and water, recreational opportunities and forest products. Impacts from climate change, extreme weather, and other disturbances-along with changing human demands-challenge our ability to ensure that ecosystems are healthy, resilient, and more adaptable to changing conditions. The Forest Service is adjusting behaviors and actions by using the best available science and information to ensure our forests and grasslands continue to deliver values, products, and services both now and in the future.

Minturn is surrounded on all sides by federal lands. You can not put a value on the beauty of the Eagle River corridor, or the recreational opportunities that this land affords residents as well as visitors from all over the nation. An unsightly power line diminishes the aesthetic values of Minturn's mountain and river corridor, as well as limiting recreation in that area.

I can imagine what a cooperative measure between HCE, the USFS and local groups could produce. Perhaps the corridor where the lines are buried could be developed as a mountain bike trail that could connect to the

extensive trails already in the area. Or a hiking trail, to connect hikers to the popular Two Elk Trail.

The bottom line for HCE is an economic one. Short term utility profits and lower cost development and utility costs for Holy Cross users (which doesn't include Minturn residents) must not take precedence over the safety and preservation of the beauty of Minturn. Holy Cross profits are not the problem of the Forest Service. Please do everything in your power to require HCE to bury the entire transmission line through the Minturn Valley and beyond.

Deb Davis