

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY**

**BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAIN ELECTRIC MEMBERSHIP CORPORATION  
PROPOSED SUBSTATION – TOWNS COUNTY, GEORGIA –  
SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA)**

In March 2009, the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) issued a final environmental assessment (FEA) and finding of no significant impact (FONSI) relating to a request by Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation (BRMEMC) for TVA fee property and a permanent easement located within TVA Tract XCHR-12R (also known as Parcel 52) on Chatuge Reservoir in Towns County, Georgia (TVA 2009). The FEA and FONSI are incorporated by reference. Prior to submitting the land request to TVA, BRMEMC reviewed several other potential substation locations and transmission line (TL) routes in the Hiwassee area. Additionally, BRMEMC worked with the Towns County Homeowners Association (TCHA) to identify and evaluate other possible sites. BRMEMC evaluated seven alternative substation locations and three TL routes. TCHA identified two additional potential substation sites.

In the FEA, BRMEMC determined that Substation Sites 1-4, 6, and 7 and TL Routes 2 and 3 did not meet the needs of the project or would not be financially feasible. The two sites identified by TCHA were not selected by BRMEMC because they were either too small for the proposed substation or had other issues that made their use infeasible. Since the completion of the FEA in March 2009, TVA has learned that some of the site details in the FEA are not accurate. TVA has prepared a supplemental environmental assessment (SEA) to correct errors regarding TCHA Site 2, and the SEA is incorporated by reference.

**Impacts Assessment**

The potential effects of the proposed land use and permitting actions, as well as the resulting construction and operation of the proposed substation and a short length of connecting TL on a portion of Parcel 52, have been evaluated in the FEA prepared by TVA, and those potential effects are unchanged. Since completion of the FEA, additional site information was acquired from both BRMEMC and TCHA. After the FEA and FONSI were issued, TVA learned that the description of TCHA Site 2 was not completely accurate; therefore, information regarding TCHA Site 2 has been revised in the SEA. The FEA misstates the size and elevations of TCHA Site 2. The scope of the SEA is limited to revising the description and analysis of TCHA Site 2.

The FEA states that TCHA Site 2 is approximately 2 acres. TCHA Site 2 is more accurately described as a 1.7-acre portion of a larger 2.7-acre commercial tract (Attachment B of the SEA). The 2.7-acre tract has substantial changes in elevation and is divided into an upper tier and a lower tier, but both levels would not have to be combined in order to accommodate the proposed substation. Therefore, extensive site preparation of TCHA Site 2 would not be required to change the elevations of the two tiers into a usable area large enough to accommodate substation construction. In order to place a substation on TCHA Site 2, extensive grading would not need to occur. The elevation miscalculation in the FEA is noteworthy because additional grading translates into additional cost, and cost is one of the criteria BRMEMC considered when selecting the substation site and TL routes.

Based on current TCHA Site 2 information, site preparation costs would not be extensive. However, other additional costs that are largely correlated to the associated TL improvements would be associated with the selection of this site.

BRMEMC would need to acquire right-of-way across the road frontage lot to gain access to the second tier lot. The existing TL right-of-way is not on the side adjacent to TCHA Site 2. In order for the TL to enter TCHA Site 2, BRMEMC would need to engineer a 90-degree turn in the TL. In order to accommodate the 90-degree turn, installation of TL and structure support called down guys would be required. BRMEMC estimates that an additional 40-foot by 90-foot right-of-way (0.08 acre) would be required to accommodate the down guys. Furthermore, there would also be additional engineering costs to build the TL in and out of the site due to the elevation change between TCHA Site 2 and the lower tier.

In the FEA, site-specific cost analyses were not provided to TVA; however, BRMEMC determined that TCHA Site 2 was not a financially feasible alternative location. Since the FEA was published in March 2009, BRMEMC contacted the owner of the commercial tract and requested a cost estimate to purchase the 1.7-acre TCHA Site 2. The property owner provided BRMEMC an estimate of \$570,000. In addition, a 0.08-acre tract of additional property needed for the right-of-way associated with the 90-degree TL turn would cost \$595,000 (purchase price for entire approximate 0.74-acre tract).

As discussed in the FEA, BRMEMC has selected Site 5 on TVA's Parcel 52 as the preferred site because the substation would be located near existing TL routes and BRMEMC's load center. BRMEMC estimated the site preparation costs to be approximately \$65,000, and TVA has established the minimum bid for the 1.4-acre property at approximately \$177,257. Therefore, BRMEMC's overall costs for Site 5 would be a minimum of approximately \$242,257. In addition, Site 5 avoids the potential significant visual impacts associated with some of the other evaluated sites, and none of the other sites are clearly environmentally superior to Site 5.

Additionally, a representative from BRMEMC attended TCHA's board meeting on April 9, 2009. At the meeting, BRMEMC presented to the board BRMEMC's research and conclusions considered in selecting the substation site and why TCHA Site 2 was not selected as the preferred substation site. Issues such as acquiring additional land for right-of-way down guys, additional TL engineering to account for the elevation change to TCHA Site 2, and challenges gaining site access from US 76 would need to be addressed in order to select TCHA Site 2.

Following BRMEMC's explanation, TCHA indicated their understanding of and agreement with BRMEMC's decision to choose Parcel 52. Furthermore, TCHA indicated that it is convinced that a reasonable effort was made to complete the evaluation of TCHA Site 2. TCHA no longer opposes the selection of Parcel 52.

### **Mitigation**

The development commitments and the environmental commitments specified in the FEA remain unchanged. The commitments will be listed in the warranty deed, easement instrument, and/or Section 26a permit. Additionally, the environmental commitments would be entered into TVA's electronic database and tracking system used to record environmental reviews.

### **Conclusion and Findings**

TVA has assessed the potential impacts associated with the BRMEMC proposal. The conclusions specified in the FEA and FONSI remain unchanged. TVA concludes that, with implementation of the mitigation measures and permit conditions described in the FEA and

March 11, 2009, FONSI, the proposed land actions and issuance of the Section 26a approval would not be a major federal action significantly affecting the environment. Accordingly, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required.



April 15, 2009

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Date Signed