



United States Department of the Interior
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Pea Ridge National Military Park
 15930 Highway 62 East
 Garfield, Arkansas 72732
 479-451-8122/fax 0219



IN REPLY REFER TO:

PERI 7617

ARK. PUBLIC SERV. COMM
 2013 MAY 14 P 4: 05
 RECEIVED

Ms. Kristi Rhude, Secretary
 Arkansas Public Service Commission
 P. O. Box 400
 1000 Center Street
 Little Rock, AR 72203

Dear Ms. Kristi Rhude,

It has recently been brought to our attention at Pea Ridge National Military Park and the National Park Service (NPS) that Southwestern Electric Power Company (SWEPCO) has applied to Arkansas Public Service Commission (Commission) for necessary certificates to construct a 48 mile long 345 kV transmission line originating at the Shipe Road Station near Centerton, Benton County, Arkansas and terminating at the proposed Kings River Station.

To date, neither SWEPCO nor the Arkansas Public Service Commission has contacted or consulted with us regarding this proposed project, which could have far-reaching impacts on park scenery, natural and cultural resources, and the historic landscape of one of the Civil War's most intact battlefields. As such, we are sending a similar letter to SWEPCO to alert them that Pea Ridge National Military Park could be impacted and that the NPS is very interested in learning more about their project.

At the urging of local and state lawmakers, Pea Ridge National Military Park was established by Congress in 1956. The park commemorates the site of the March 1862 battle that kept Missouri under Union control and many historians consider it a turning point in the Civil War's Trans-Mississippi region. Nearly 26,000 soldiers fought to determine whether Missouri would remain under Union control, and whether or not Federal armies could continue their offensive south through the Mississippi River Valley. The battle was the largest Civil War engagement west of the Mississippi River and has since become a major tourism draw for the region. In 2012, the park received nearly 132,000 visitors. Based on the NPS's Money Generation Model, in 2011 park visitors spent approximately \$6.1 million dollars locally which supported and estimated 96 jobs.

We are concerned that Route 33, SWEPCO's preferred route, as well as Route 62 would be sited only approximately 1,200 feet (or .2 miles) from the boundary of Pea Ridge National Military Park. Proposed 150 foot tall towers would rise well above the area's tree canopy and likely be easily viewable from the visitor center and from numerous key overlooks within the park. As such, we are deeply concerned that these two routes may unacceptably impact park scenery, which at this point remain little unchanged from when the battle took place. Additionally, pursuant to the General Authorities Act of 1970 the park has identified nearby lands outside the

boundary of the park its 2006 General Management Plan for potential boundary adjustments. Many of these historically significant lands are located just south of the current park boundary and would be crossed by Route 33 and 62. To better understand potential impacts to historic and natural resources within the park we have encouraged SWEPCO to work with us to prepare visual simulations from the visitor center and key overlooks within the park.

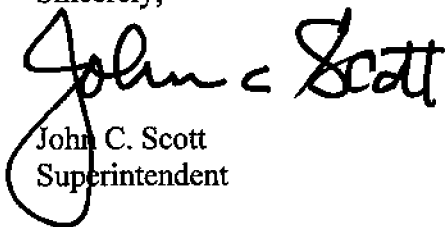
In addition to Pea Ridge, The Trail of Tears National Historic Trail (NHT) could also be impacted by this project at a number of locations. The Trail of Tears was designated as an NHT by Congress in December 1987. The trail commemorates the tragic story of the forced removal of the Cherokee and other American Indian tribes from their homelands during 1838-1839, and subsequent relocation in eastern Oklahoma. The trail has great cultural significance to the Cherokee and other tribes. To determine what segments of the Trail of Tears may be impacted, we have asked SWEPCO to share with us GIS shape files for all six alternative routes.

Another potentially impacted historic site is the proposed Butterfield Overland Trail National Historic Trail, which crosses Pea Ridge National Military Park. This historic trail commemorates the routes pioneered by John Butterfield and the Butterfield Overland Stage Company as they traveled between the eastern termini of St. Louis, Missouri and the western terminus of San Francisco, California. Stages traveled over this route between 1858 and 1861. In recognition of the perceived national importance of these routes, and in response to public advocacy for the inclusion of these routes in the National Trails System, Congress passed legislation instructing the NPS to prepare a special resource study for the trail that was signed by President Obama on March 30, 2009. Finally, it appears that the site of the February 7, 1861 Battle of Little Sugar Creek, located roughly 4 miles south of Pea Ridge National Military Park, could also be impacted by both Routes 86 and 91. This parcel of land is the site of the first Civil War battle in the state of Arkansas.

Again, since we were recently made aware of SWEPCO's proposal, it will take us time to review their application and the associated environmental review and to develop substantive comments. We will do our best to provide you with these comments as soon as possible. In the meantime, we invite you to meet with us at Pea Ridge National Military Park to discuss the project and our concerns.

Please contact me at 479-451-8122 ext. 224 if you have any questions or would like to arrange a time to visit the park and meet with my staff and me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John C. Scott". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

John C. Scott
Superintendent

cc:

Mr. Michael Reynolds, Regional Director Midwest Region, National Park Service,

601 Riverfront Drive, Omaha, NE 68102
Mr. Aaron Mahr, Superintendent, National Park Service, National Trails Intermountain Region,
P.O. Box 728, Santa Fe, MN 87505
Honorable Mark Pryor, United States Senate, Washington D.C. 20510
Honorable John Boozman, United States Senate, Washington D.C. 20510
Honorable Steve Womack, House of Representatives, Washington D.C. 20510
Mr. Mike Beebe, Arkansas Governor, 500 Woodland Street, Little Rock AR 72201
Mr. Dustin McDaniel, Arkansas Attorney General, 323 Center Street, Little Rock, AR 72201
Ms. Martha Miller, Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 323 Center Street, Suite 1500,
Little Rock AR 72201
Mr. Richard Davies, Arkansas Department of Parks & Tourism, One Capitol Mall,
Little Rock, AR 72201
Mr. Jackie Crabtree, Mayor City of Pea Ridge, AR, P.O. Box 10, 227 A East Pickings Street
Pea Ridge, AR 72751
Ms. Laura Hamilton, Mayor Garfield, AR, PO Box 131, Garfield, AR 72732
Mr. James Lighthizer, President, Civil War Trust, 1156 15th Street NW, Suite 900, Washington
D.C. 20005
Mr. Bill John Baker, Principal Chief, Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, P.O. Box 948,
Tahlequah, OK 74465
Mr. John D. Red Eagle, Principal Chief, The Osage Nation, P.O. Box 779, Pawhuska, OK 74056
Mr. John Berrey, Tribal Chairperson, Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma, P.O. Box 765,
Quapaw, OK 74363
Mr. George Wickliffe, Chief, United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians, P.O. Box 746,
Tahlequah, OK 74465
Mr. Glenn Jones, Commissioner, Benton County Historical Preservation Commission,
300 W Poplar, Ste. 6, Rogers, AR 72756
Pea Ridge National Military Park Foundation, P.O. Box 925, Pea Ridge, AR 72751
Heritage Trails Partners, 623 Soring Greek Road, Lowell, AR 72745