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Gen-Tie Line to Connect Future Arizona Wind Power to Cholla Transmission

Oct 25, 2019

The Arizona Corporation Commission at a brief meeting Oct. 22 approved a certificate of environmental compatibility for a 12-mile, 345-kV gen-tie line, two new substations and one new switching station in Northern Arizona [L-21080A-19-0171-00182]. The facilities are intended to connect a planned 477-MW wind farm to Arizona Public Service's Preacher Canyon-Cholla 345-kV transmission lines, currently connected to the coal-fired Cholla Power Plant.

The Cholla plant, jointly owned by APS and PacifiCorp, saw retirement of one of its four units in 2015, freeing up transmission capacity on the lines. APS plans to close its remaining two Cholla units by the spring of 2025 according to spokeswoman Lily Quezada. PacifiCorp has set January 2023 as the closure deadline for Unit 4, David Eskelsen of Rocky Mountain Power said in a phone call.

The Arizona Power Plant and Transmission Line Siting Committee approved the Chevelon Butte Wind Gen-Tie Project Sept. 18.

If built, the planned Chevelon Butte Wind Farm will more than double the state's wind generation capacity, according to Terrance Unrein, senior permitting manager for Salt Lake City-based sPower, the project's developer.

"This is an ideal opportunity for northern Arizona to utilize these existing transmission lines coming off of the Cholla Power Plant that will soon be underutilized when this coal plant is removed from service," Unrein said at the meeting. It also gives the region an opportunity to utilize the lines for a wind farm in one of the state's best wind resource zones, he added.

Chevelon Butte Wind Farm is planned for Coconino and Navajo counties about 20 miles south of Winslow, Arizona, and 30 miles west of the 127-MW Dry Lake Wind Power Project, also in Navajo County. Dry Lake is owned by Iberdrola Renewables of Bilbao, Spain, which has offices in Tempe. Salt River Project has a power-purchase agreement for 100 percent of the output of Dry Lake, which began service as Arizona's first commercial wind farm in 2009.

The 99-MW Perrin Ranch Wind Energy Center, owned by NextEra Energy, lies west of the planned Chevelon Butte project and began operations in 2012. APS has a PPA with NextEra for the output of Perrin Ranch.

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