



Department of Energy

Washington, DC 20585

April 30, 2026

Lisa D. Jones
Executive Director and State Historic Preservation Officer
468 South Perry Street
P.O. Box 300900
Montgomery, AL 36130

SUBJECT: U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Energy Dominance Financing, Section 106 Consultation, Alabama Power Company, Lock 5 Transmission Substation Project, Hale County, Alabama

Dear Ms. Jones,

Pursuant to its authority under Title XVII of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, as amended, which established a Federal loan guarantee program, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Office of Energy Dominance Financing (EDF) is evaluating whether to provide a Federal loan guarantee to Alabama Power Company (APC, or the Applicant) for the Lock 5 Transmission Substation (TS) Project (the Project), located in Hale County, Alabama.

The purpose of this letter is to formally initiate consultation with the Alabama State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended (54 United States Code [U.S.C.] 306108), and its implementing regulations, 36 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 800, "Protection of Historic Properties." This letter presents descriptions of the undertaking, the Area of Potential Effects (APE), the efforts to identify historic properties, and the undertaking's effects on historic properties, and seeks your concurrence with DOE's Finding of No Adverse Effect for this Project.

A cultural resources report is included as Attachment 1, and an Alabama Historical Commission (AHC) Review and Consultation Form is included as Attachment 2.

Description of the Undertaking

DOE's action is the issuance of a proposed Federal loan guarantee to the Applicant for the undertaking (i.e., the Project), which includes construction of a new 1,055-foot by 1,740-foot substation and a new 30-foot-wide, approximately 0.25-mile-long gravel access road from Hale County Road 16 to the proposed TS. The TS will include the following key electrical equipment: power transformers, power circuit breakers, line and breaker disconnect switches, instrument transformers, and a control building (to house relaying and metering panels, battery banks, and miscellaneous equipment). Additionally, the Project

site would be developed for space to accommodate six additional 500 kV terminals and two additional 230 kV terminals in the future.

Ground disturbing activities would occur on approximately 110 acres and would include placement of fill, grading, and constructing the TS and access road. Vegetation clearing is required for the TS; however, because the Project is located on agricultural land it would involve minimal tree clearing. Grading of the TS pad would immediately follow vegetation clearing and could include adjacent areas for construction laydown. The eastern portion of the site adjacent to Hale County Road 16 may be utilized as a temporary parking area, laydown yard, and material receiving area before the pad is developed. A permanent detention pond will be constructed immediately south of the TS pad to manage stormwater. The access road will be located south of the intersection of Owl Road and Hale County Road 16 and will intersect the west side, south travel lane of Hale County Road 16.

Additional descriptions of the Project area and maps of the Project are provided in the cultural resource report that is included as Attachment 1.

Description of the Area of Potential Effects

As defined in the Section 106 regulations (36 CFR § 800.16(d)), the APE is the geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may directly or indirectly cause alterations in the character or use of historic properties, if any such properties exist. The dimensions of the APE are influenced by the scale and nature of an undertaking and may be different for different kinds of effects caused by the undertaking. Within the APE, DOE distinguishes different survey areas for identifying archaeological and historic architectural resources (hereafter, the “archaeological survey area” and “architectural survey area”). The archaeological survey area is defined as the construction footprint of the Project where potential physical effects caused by ground-disturbing activities may occur, also known as the limits of disturbance (LOD). The architectural survey area includes the area in the Project LOD and may apply a distance buffer, as appropriate, within which potential non-physical effects (e.g., visual, vibrational, auditory, or atmospheric) could occur. These survey areas collectively comprise the APE for the Project.

The Project’s archaeological survey area includes approximately 206.3 acres. This is a broader area than what would be subject to ground disturbance during construction (approximately 110 acres), allowing for Project design and siting flexibility. The Project’s architectural survey area includes this 206.3-acre area and the adjacent parcels. Maps are provided in the cultural resources report that is included as Attachment 1.

Description of Efforts to Identify Historic Properties

Tribal Outreach

In accordance with Section 106, DOE identified federally recognized Native American Indian Tribes (Tribes) that may have an interest in the Project area. DOE has notified the following seven (7) federally recognized Tribes to see if they have an interest in the Project: Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas; Alabama-Quassarte Tribal Town; Choctaw Nation of

Oklahoma; Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana; Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians; Muscogee (Creek) Nation; and Seminole Tribe of Florida.

By separate letter sent concurrently with this submission to the SHPO, DOE EDF has requested Tribal respondents to provide their comments on the undertaking, provide information regarding historic properties of religious or cultural significance to Tribes that may be present in the APE, and to identify any additional Tribes that may share an interest in the Project area so DOE EDF can promptly invite them to consult. DOE EDF will consider all comments received from Tribes during the 30-day consultation period and will coordinate with the SHPO and other consulting parties, as appropriate, if additional consultation is requested or deemed necessary.

Records Search

As part of the Section 106 identification process, the Applicant contracted the Office of Archaeological Research (OAR) at the University of Alabama to conduct cultural resource surveys. OAR prepared the cultural resources report that is included as Attachment 1 and summarized below.

OAR conducted a search of the Alabama Cultural Resources Online Database (ACROD), Alabama State Site File (ASSF), Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage (ARLH) and related supplements, and the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) to identify previously conducted surveys and previously recorded cultural resources and historic properties within a 1-mile radius of the Project. This background research identified no previous surveys and no previously recorded archaeological resources within a 1-mile radius of the Project. No ARLH- or NRHP-listed historic properties are located within the 1-mile-radius study area; however, the AHC's GIS map includes three previously evaluated historic resources within the 1-mile-radius study area that were previously recommended NRHP-eligible. One of these eligible historic properties is within the APE on an adjacent parcel to the Project area and is included in the historic architecture survey, while the other two identified properties are located outside of the APE, approximately 0.8 miles and 1 mile northeast of the Project. Lastly, three (3) cemeteries are located within the 1-mile search radius, all of which are located outside of the APE for the Project.

Following the completion of background research, OAR completed a Phase I cultural resources survey to identify newly recorded archaeological sites and historic architectural resources within the APE. The results of the survey are provided in Attachment 1 and summarized below.

Archaeological Resources

The archaeological field investigations consisted of pedestrian walkover of the archaeological survey area employing visual inspection of the ground surface and subsurface testing where conditions allowed. Shovel tests were excavated at either 30-meter or 60-meter intervals depending on the terrain and ground conditions within the survey area (i.e., areas with lower probability for archaeological preservation were sampled

at greater intervals of 60 meters). A total of 349 shovel tests were excavated during the survey, resulting in the identification of three (3) new archaeological sites (1Ha382, 1Ha383, and 1Ha384) and one isolated find (IF 1) within the APE. Each of these sites was found to be in a highly disturbed context and lacking depositional integrity or significant historical associations; therefore, sites 1Ha382, 1Ha383, 1Ha384, and the isolated find are not eligible for inclusion in the NRHP.

An additional 24 shovel tests were excavated to delineate the boundaries of another new archaeological site, 1Ha385, which lies just outside of the Project's APE. OAR recommends that this site is potentially eligible for the NRHP; however, since it is not located within the APE for the undertaking and would not be affected by this Project, DOE EDF is not consulting on the eligibility of this site.

Additional details on the archaeological survey methods and survey results, as well as individual site descriptions, NRHP eligibility evaluations, maps, photographs, artifact inventories, and AHC site forms are included in Attachment 1.

Historic Architectural Resources

The historic architectural survey included photographic documentation, reevaluation, and update of the AHC Historic Building Survey Form for the previously recorded Sykes Martin House (Resource ID: HA_654). The resource was originally documented in a 1992 architectural history survey of Hale County. The Alabama Historic Preservation Map indicates that Resource HA_654 is considered a potentially eligible resource under Criterion C (Architecture), in the category of a late nineteenth and early twentieth century American Movement resource. Attachment 1 provides a detailed description of the resource including information, maps, and photographs from the 1992 evaluation, as well as new research, photographs, and an updated AHC Historic Building Survey Form from the current survey. OAR concludes the Sykes Martin House still retains integrity and character-defining features as documented in the original 1992 survey, and thus should remain recommended eligible for inclusion in the NRHP.

Description of the Undertaking's Effects on Historic Properties

One (1) historic architectural resource recommended eligible for the NRHP was identified in the APE for the Project: the Sykes Martin House (Resource ID HA_654). This historic property is considered a potentially eligible resource under Criterion C (Architecture), in the category of a late nineteenth and early twentieth century American Movement resource. The survey report authors (OAR) recommend a finding of adverse effect based on the visibility of the Project constituting a visual effect on the eligible historic property (see Attachment 1). However, DOE EDF disagrees with this recommendation and instead has concluded that the undertaking will have no adverse effect on this historic property, as described below.

The Sykes Martin House is potentially eligible under NRHP Criterion C for its architecture (i.e., it is primarily the physical features of the building that comprise its character-defining

features). The property is not recommended as eligible under Criteria A or B for significant historic associations, nor Criterion D for significant research potential. Furthermore, Attachment 1 indicates there is no evidence of any agricultural outbuildings that were associated with the period of the original main dwelling (ca. 1925) and therefore the property is not recommended as eligible under Criterion A for association with an historic agricultural context.

Project visibility from an historic property does not inherently mean a visual effect is adverse in the context of Section 106; that is, to be considered adverse, the visual effect would have to diminish the qualities that qualify the property for inclusion in the NRHP.

In this case, Project visibility does not alter the physical architectural characteristics of the Sykes Martin House and thus would not diminish its character-defining features in a manner that would disqualify the property from being considered eligible under Criterion C for architecture. Regarding integrity of setting, feeling, and association, while the agricultural setting to the north/northwest of the historic property would be altered by the Project, this setting is not discussed as a contributing factor to the property's eligibility under Criterion C. Rather, the landscape surrounding the front façade and primary viewshed of the Sykes Martin House toward the south/southwest, in the opposite direction of the Project, includes mature live oaks that were documented in the 1992 survey; the Project will not alter this setting. Furthermore, on the north side of the property there is a mature tree line, a recently constructed residential structure, and several modern outbuildings that will visually screen the historic main dwelling from the Project.

Therefore, it is DOE EDF's opinion that the Project will have no adverse effect on the NRHP-eligible Sykes Martin House.

Requesting your Concurrence and Next Steps

Based on DOE EDF's review of the efforts to identify historic properties and conclusions drawn from this information, DOE EDF is issuing a Finding of No Adverse Effect, consistent with 36 CFR § 800.5(d)(1). As part of the Section 106 process, DOE EDF requests the concurrence of the Alabama SHPO on the Finding of No Adverse Effect, as well as any comments you may have on the APE or the Project **within thirty (30) days of receipt of this letter.**

In the event of a post-review unanticipated discovery of cultural resources and/or human remains during construction, DOE EDF will determine actions to resolve adverse effects and notify the SHPO, any Tribe that might attach religious and cultural significance to the affected property, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) within 48 hours of the discovery, pursuant to 36 CFR 800.13(b)(3).

We look forward to consulting with your office throughout the Section 106 process. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this project further, please contact me at 240-687-7266 or via email at EDF_Environmental@doe.gov.

Sincerely,

Molly R. Cobbs
Environmental Project Manager
Office of Energy Dominance Financing

Attachments:

Attachment 1. OAR Cultural Resources Report

Attachment 2. AHC Project Review and Consultation Form