Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

October 20, 2026

Joseph Bell
Executive Director and State Historic Preservation Officer
Texas Historical Commission
P.O. Box 12276
Austin, Texas 78711

cc:
John Kisalus, Victoria County Historical Commission

SUBJECT: U.S. Department of Energy, Office of Energy Dominance Financing, Section 106 Consultation, American Electric Power, DuPont to Chocolate Bayou Transmission Line Rebuild Project, Victoria County, Texas

Dear Mr. Bell,

The United States Department of Energy (DOE), Office of Energy Dominance Financing (EDF) has executed a Federal loan guarantee agreement with American Electric Power (AEP or Borrower) pursuant to DOE's authority under Title XVII of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, as amended. The loan guarantee to AEP is intended to provide financing for many projects over the life of the Federal loan guarantee. Each project is reviewed and considered individually prior to being approved for financing under the Federal loan guarantee. AEP has identified the DuPont to Chocolate Bayou Transmission Line Rebuild Project (the Project), located in Victoria County, Texas, for potential inclusion in the loan guarantee.

The purpose of this letter is to formally initiate consultation with the Texas State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), represented by the Texas Historical Commission (THC), 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 a description 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 a Request for SHPO Consultation Form is included as Attachment 2.

The parties listed above that are copied on this letter are invited to participate as consulting parties to the Section 106 consultation and may provide their comments on the undertaking to DOE EDF. In accordance with the confidentiality provisions of the Section 106 regulations at 36 CFR 800.11(c), to avoid the disclosure of potentially sensitive cultural resources information to the public, DOE EDF has respectfully withheld Attachment 1

from dissemination to those members of the public invited to participate as consulting parties. DOE EDF has made this consultation letter available for public view to solicit comments from the general public on the undertaking.

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 involves rebuilding approximately 2.7 miles of existing 138 kilovolt (kV) transmission line infrastructure beginning at the Dupont Substation and terminating at the Chocolate Bayou Substation located in Victoria County, Texas. The proposed Project involves rebuilding existing linear transmission line infrastructure in the general location of each pole structure within the existing 100-foot-wide right-of-way (ROW). The Project area includes 32.7 acres of transmission line ROW corridor, 5.22 acres of pulling pockets, 0.2 miles of proposed off-ROW access roads (approximately 1.12 acres), and 0.1 miles of existing off-ROW access roads to be improved (approximately 0.56 acres), for a total construction footprint of 39.6 acres.

The Project proposes to replace the existing wooden structures with steel monopoles, replace jumpers at the Dupont Substation, and upgrade three switches at the Chocolate Bayou Substation. All existing structures, generally 50-foot-tall wood poles, will be removed from the ROW and replaced with new structures, generally 80-foot-tall monopoles, and conductors. Existing roads and ROW will be used for construction. Construction activities consistent with transmission lines typically include erosion and sediment control, crane pad grading, foundation installation, structure assembly and erection, conductor and shield wire installation, and restoration activities following construction completion.

Project maps are provided in the cultural resources 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 EDF 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 the approximately 2.7-mile-long and 100-foot-wide existing ROW corridor, plus all areas external to the ROW necessary for construction (e.g., pull pads and access roads), totaling approximately 39.6 acres. The Project's architectural survey area includes the ROW and the area within a 0.5-mile radius of the Project.

DOE EDF also acknowledges that Attachment 1 refers to the archaeological survey area as the "Direct APE" and the architectural survey area as the "Indirect APE", and notes that in accordance with the 2019 D.C. Circuit Court decision in *National Parks Conservation Association v. Semonite*, visual effects that are caused by the undertaking are considered direct effects.

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 five (5) federally recognized Tribes to see if they have an interest in the Project: Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas; Apache Tribe of Oklahoma; Comanche Nation, Oklahoma; Tonkawa Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma; and Wichita and Affiliated Tribes (Wichita, Keechi, Waco, and Tawakonie), Oklahoma.

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 necessary.

Records Search

As part of the Section 106 process, the Applicant contracted SWCA Environmental Consultants, Inc. (SWCA) to conduct cultural resource identification surveys. SWCA prepared the cultural resources report that is included as Attachment 1 and summarized below.

Prior to the initiation of fieldwork, SWCA conducted a file review for a 1-kilometer radius study area surrounding the Project. The online restricted-access Texas Historical and Archeological Sites Atlas was reviewed to identify previously recorded archeological and historical sites within the study area. In addition, previously recorded cultural resource data available online from the Texas Historical Sites Atlas were reviewed to identify the locations of historical sites, cemeteries, National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) properties, State Antiquities Landmarks, and Official Texas Historical Markers recorded within the study area. The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Historic

Resources Aggregator was reviewed for resources that are listed or determined eligible for listing on the NRHP. NPS websites and data centers were reviewed to identify locations and boundaries for historic properties and historic trails. SWCA also reviewed historical topographic maps and aerial photographs within the APE and study area.

The review indicated no previous cultural resource surveys within the 1-kilometer-radius study area, though one (1) previously recorded archaeological site and one (1) NRHP-eligible property (Victoria Barge Canal) are documented within the study area; neither of these resources are within the Project ROW. Three segments of a historic railroad intersect the APE towards its western end. A LiDAR analysis identified four previously identified historic levees intersecting the APE; however, according to modern aerial imagery and ground truthing, these levees are no longer in use. No NRHP-listed properties, State Antiquities Landmarks, Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks, Official Texas Historical Markers, local historic districts, cemeteries, local neighborhood surveys, or Freedom Colonies are in the APE or study area. Additional details and maps are provided in Attachment 1.

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

Archaeological Resources

A Phase I archaeological survey was conducted to identify archaeological resources within the Project ROW and temporary workspace (e.g., access roads and pull pads). The survey was conducted by qualified SWCA archaeologists and in accordance with applicable state and federal guidelines. The survey consisted of pedestrian reconnaissance supplemented by subsurface shovel testing where field conditions allowed. A total of 62 shovel tests were excavated within the APE, two (2) of which were positive for cultural materials and documented as two historic-age Isolated Occurrences, which are considered not eligible for the NRHP. The positive shovel tests and identified materials did not indicate the presence of intact or significant cultural deposits, and no resources were identified that required further investigation.

Additional details on the archaeological survey methods and results, maps, photographs, shovel test log, and descriptions of the Isolated Occurrences are provided in Attachment 1.

Historic Architectural Resources

SWCA conducted a reconnaissance-level survey to document historic-age resources (at least 45 years old) within the APE. No above-ground historic structures were recorded within the Project ROW, and a total of 61 historic architectural resources within the 0.5-mile radius APE were documented during the survey. Table 8-1 in Attachment 1 provides details on all identified historic resources, including date of construction, architectural style, historic/current function, and NRHP eligibility recommendation. Additional

information and photographs of the surveyed resources are included in the Appendices of Attachment 1.

Two (2) historic properties were identified as a result of the Historic Resources Survey. The Victoria Barge Canal (**Resource 1** in Attachment 1) was previously determined eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A for Maritime History, Industry, and Transportation at the local level. SWCA recommends expansion of the boundary to the Port of Victoria per the recommendations of a 2023 Calhoun County Survey, making the entire canal from San Antonio Bay to the Port of Victoria the recommended NRHP-eligible boundary. No changes are recommended to the significance areas or period of significance for the historic property. DOE EDF affirms the previously determined eligibility of this property.

SWCA recommends the DuPont Employee Recreation Area (**Resource 7E** in Attachment 1) is eligible for the NRHP as a historic district under Criterion A for Recreation and Culture as well as Social History at the local level for its association with mid-twentieth century industrial social history and employer-sponsored recreation in Bloomington, Texas. The associated park boundary is the recommended NRHP boundary. The recommended period of significance is ca. 1955 to 1981, spanning the time from its opening to the current survey cutoff date. Resources 7E–Z are contributing to the district, and non-historic-age Resources 7AB and 7AF–G are noncontributing to the district (see Attachment 1).

Additional description of the two historic properties is included in Attachment 1.

Description of the Undertaking's Effects on Historic Properties

The Victoria Barge Canal is affirmed as eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A, and the DuPont Employee Recreation Area is recommended as eligible for the NRHP under Criterion A as an historic district. Both properties are located on parcels with boundaries that intersect the 0.5-mile radius APE for the Project; however, the boundaries of the historic properties themselves are located outside of the 0.5-mile radius APE (see Attachment 1). Although the parcels on which these properties are located intersect the 0.5-mile radius APE, existing interceding topography and vegetation between the properties and the proposed Project ROW screen the viewshed towards the proposed Project. Visibility of the Project would be negligible given the distance of the properties from the proposed Project (over 0.5 mile). As such, the Project will not cause physical or visual effects on either historic property. Furthermore, because the Project is a rebuild of an existing transmission line, the Project would not cause any new visual intrusions or other non-physical changes to the setting that would diminish the integrity of any character-defining features of these historic properties. Therefore, the proposed Project would have **no adverse effect** on the two (2) historic properties.

Requesting your Concurrence and Next Steps

Based on DOE's review of the efforts to identify historic properties and conclusions drawn from this information, DOE 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 Texas 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**.

The parties listed above that are copied on this letter are invited to participate as Section 106 consulting parties and may provide their comments on the undertaking to DOE EDF **within thirty (30) days of receipt of this letter**. In accordance with the confidentiality provisions of the Section 106 regulations at 36 CFR 800.11(c), to avoid the disclosure of potentially sensitive cultural resources information to the public, DOE EDF has respectfully withheld Attachment 1 from dissemination to those members of the public invited to participate as consulting parties. DOE EDF has made this consultation letter available for public view to solicit comments from the general public on the undertaking.

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 via email at EDF_Environmental@doe.gov.

Sincerely,

DONALD BROWN

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Date: 2026.10.21 13:02:20 -04'00'

Donald Brown
Environmental Project Manager
Office of Energy Dominance Financing

Attachments:
Attachment 1. Cultural Resources Report
Attachment 2. Request for SHPO Consultation Form