

# **Environmental Assessment: East Central Georgia Reliability Projects**

Prepared by Environmental and Historic Preservation Divisions, Rural Utilities  
Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture

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**U.S. Department of Energy,  
Office of Energy Dominance Financing  
Title XVII Energy Dominance Financing Program**



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**Lead Federal Agency:** U.S. Department of Energy

**Title:** Environmental Assessment: East Central Georgia Reliability Projects

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### **Proposed Action**

The United States Department of Energy (DOE), Office of Energy Dominance Financing (EDF), may provide loan guarantees for energy infrastructure projects under Section 1706 of Title XVII of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, as amended by the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (42 U.S.C. 16517) and the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (Pub. L. No. 119-21, 139 Stat. 72 (July 4, 2025)) (the Energy Dominance Financing or EDF Program). The purpose of the EDF Program is to finance projects and facilities in the U.S. that retool, repower, repurpose, or replace energy infrastructure that has ceased operations or enable operating energy infrastructure to increase capacity or output (42 U.S.C. 16517(a)(2) and Pub. L. No. 119-21, 139 Stat. 72 (July 4, 2025)).

EDF is considering whether to issue a loan guarantee of a funding facility to Georgia Power Company (GPC) pursuant to its authority under the EDF Program. In its application, GPC has identified the Rockville 500kV Substation project (Project) for inclusion in the funding facility that is the subject of DOE's loan guarantee. GPC may request inclusion of multiple individual projects with independent utility in the funding facility that is the subject of the DOE loan guarantee; accordingly, EDF will complete environmental reviews pursuant to applicable and relevant environmental statutes for these projects prior to their inclusion in the funding facility that is the subject of DOE's loan guarantee.

The Project site is located within Putnam County along Rockville Road and near the intersection of Rockville Road and Rockville Springs Landing. The site is approximately 1-mile south of Sparta Hwy / State Route 16, 1.5-miles east of the community of Rockville, and approximately 10 miles east of the city of Eatonton. The site is located on a 107-acre, triangular property owned by GPC; two sides of the property are bordered by existing transmission line rights-of-way and the third side of the property is bordered by Rockville Road.

The Project involves the construction of a new 500kV, 3-element ring-bus switching station with 3-500kV circuit breakers to support three new 500kV lines: the East Walton – Rockville 500kV Line, the Rockville – Scherer 500kV Line, and the Rockville – Warthen 500kV Line. In addition, the Project includes looping the existing Scherer-Warthen 500kV Line into the new Rockville 500kV switching station by constructing approximately 1 mile of 500kV transmission line and

installation of one structure (#432A). The proposed switching station is located on the eastern side of the property.

The facilities to be constructed within the Project area include the 500kV switching station, access road, permanent stormwater detention and oil-containment pond, temporary laydown yard, and the Scherer-Warthen 500kV Tie Line and new structure 432A. Total ground disturbance associated with these facilities is 41 acres (of this, 38 acres are associated with tree removal and clearing). Maintenance clearing may be required within the existing 150-foot ROW, near the proposed Project site. Existing public roadways, in conjunction with the existing Scherer-Warthen 500kV Transmission Line access road and the proposed switching station access road will be used to transport materials and equipment to the site.

GPC and their contractors employ standard Best Management Practices (BMPs) across all projects and programs in accordance with federal, state and local regulations.

The purpose and need for DOE's proposed action, the issuance of a Federal loan guarantee under the EDF Program, is to implement DOE's authority under Title XVII of the Energy Policy Act, as amended. The purpose of the EDF Program is to finance projects and facilities in the U.S. that retool, repower, repurpose, or replace energy infrastructure that has ceased operations or enable operating energy infrastructure to increase capacity or output (42 U.S.C. 16517(a)(2) and Pub. L. No. 119-21, 139 Stat. 72 (July 4, 2025)).

## **Background and Context**

Georgia Transmission Corporation (GTC) proposes to construct several transmission lines and substation facilities associated with the East Central Georgia Reliability (ECGR) Project to address the area's electrical needs.

ECGR Project participants include GTC, GPC, and the Municipal Electric Authority of Georgia (MEAG). Along with Dalton Utilities, these entities are the members of the Georgia Integrated Transmission System (ITS). Although individual transmission lines and substations are constructed, owned, and maintained by individual ITS members, the ITS is planned and operated as a single, integrated system.

The ECGR project components include:

- Construction of eight new transmission facility projects.
- Proposed modifications to four existing GTC facilities.
- Proposed modifications to two existing other ITS member facilities

ITS members will construct, operate, and maintain the ECGR components; this includes GPC's construction of the new Rockville 500kV Switching Station.

## **National Environmental Policy Act Review**

DOE conducted an environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321–4347). In accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ) Memorandum to the Heads of Federal Departments and Agencies, issued on February 19,

2025, and with Executive Order 14154 issued on January 20, 2025, DOE completed this environmental review accordance with DOE's NEPA implementing procedures consistent with NEPA, E.O. 14154, and the CEQ memorandum. DOE is using the NEPA process to inform its decision whether to issue a loan guarantee to the Applicant to support the Project.

GTC requested financing assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Rural Utilities Service (RUS) for GTC's ECGR project components. RUS determined that the proposed action required the preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA). Pursuant to NEPA, an *EA for the East Central Georgia Reliability Projects* (June 2025) was prepared by the RUS. GPC's proposed Rockville 500kV Switching Station was evaluated as an ECGR project component (specifically, a connected action) in RUS' EA.

DOE was not a cooperating agency in the preparation of the RUS EA. Subsequently, DOE has conducted an independent review of the RUS EA and has determined that the Rockville 500kV Switching Station analyzed in RUS EA and DOE's proposed action are substantially the same. Additionally, the RUS EA meets the standards for a sufficient environmental assessment under the DOE's NEPA procedures and EDF relied on the RUS EA.

## **Required Consultations and Other Reviews**

### *Endangered Species Act, Section 7*

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA)<sup>1</sup> requires federal agencies to ensure that their actions are not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of federally listed threatened or endangered species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of the critical habitat of such species.

RUS concluded ESA Section 7 consultation on the ECGR Project, including the Rockville Substation March 2025, prior to EDF's involvement with the project. Given time elapsed and the introduction of an additional federal nexus, EDF requested a new Official Species List, reviewed the project activities, and, where applicable, completed Determination Keys.

EDF has determined that the project will have *no effect* or is *not likely to jeopardize the species*, as applicable, for all species with potential to occur in the project's action area (3 species). There is no designated critical habitat within the project's action area. EDF's determinations are consistent with the prior RUS determinations and March 2025 USFWS concurrence letter.

### *National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106*

Under section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA),<sup>2</sup> and its implementing regulations,<sup>3</sup> federal agencies must take into account the effect of any proposed undertaking on properties listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (National

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<sup>1</sup> 16 U.S.C. § 1536.

<sup>2</sup> 54 U.S.C. § 306108.

<sup>3</sup> 36 C.F.R. pt. 800 (2021).

Register), defined as historic properties, and afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (Advisory Council) a reasonable opportunity to comment on the undertaking.

On January 14, 2026, DOE initiated Section 106 consultation with the Georgia State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). On February 10, 2026, the SHPO concurred with DOE's determination of "no adverse effect" to historic properties on the condition that GPC:

Establish a 30-foot (ft.) buffer, identified by a Secretary of the Interior (SOI)-qualified archaeologist and delineated by orange barrier fencing (OBF), for the portion of a known cultural site located within the proposed project's Area of Potential Effect, within which no project activities will occur. If avoidance is not possible SHPO recommends that a professional meeting the applicable Secretary of the Interior's (SOI) *Professional Qualifications Standards* for Archaeology be present on site to monitor ground-disturbing activity during the duration of the project activities.

On February 22, 2026, GPC confirmed that a 30-foot buffer will be added to the Rockville Substation construction plans and GPC will install the orange-barrier fencing on the site to protect the area.

In accordance with Section 106, DOE identified federally recognized Native American Indian Tribes (Tribes) that may have an interest in the Project area. On January 14, 2026, DOE notified the following ten (10) federally recognized Tribes to see if they have an interest in the Project: Alabama-Quassarte Tribal Town; Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana; Kialegee Tribal Town; Miccosukee Tribe of Indians; Muscogee (Creek) Nation; Poarch Band of Creek Indians; Seminole Tribe of Florida; Seminole Nation of Oklahoma; Thlopthlocco Tribal Town, and United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma. No tribes responded.

#### *Prime Farmland*

The Farmland Protection Policy Act (FPPA) is intended to minimize the impact federal programs have on the unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to non-agricultural uses. Projects are subject to FPPA requirements if they may irreversibly convert farmland (directly or indirectly) to nonagricultural use and are completed by a federal agency or with assistance from a federal agency. Construction of the project at the proposed site will convert approximately 107 acres of farmland to non-farming uses. Consultation with the Natural Resource Conservation Service concluded on March 17, 2026. GPC's proposed site was identified as the selected site because existing land use at the site is consistent with the proposed project and the site otherwise minimizes impacts to environmental and cultural resources.

#### *Floodplains*

N/A – The site is not located within mapped floodplains.

**Finding of No Significant Impact**

Based on DOE/EA-2313, DOE has determined that providing a federal loan guarantee to GPC for the **Rockville 500kV Substation Project** will not have a significant effect on the human environment. The preparation of an environmental impact statement is therefore not required, and DOE is issuing this Finding of No Significant Impact. This Finding of No Significant Impact should not be construed as a final decision about the issuance of a loan guarantee.

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Todd Stribley	Date
Director, Environmental Programs	
DOE Office of Energy Dominance Financing	