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Please Protect the Canadian River Basin

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Chairman Barry Smitherman
Commissioner Donna L. Nelson
Commissioner Kenneth W. Anderson
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FILING CLERK

Subject: DOCKET 38290 - SOAH Docket No. 473-10-4790 - Protect the Canadian River Basin

Dear Chairman Smitherman and Commissioners Nelson and Anderson:

The recommendation in this docket by the SOAH Administrative Law Judge inexplicably sets aside – in fact almost completely ignores – the community values evidenced in hundreds of responses generated by Sharyland’s proposal to build this White Deer to Hereford transmission line through the Canadian River Basin north of Amarillo.

I want to join again with the hundreds and hundreds of people who have already responded in Docket 37138, sending letters and post cards opposing the routing of CREZ transmission lines through the fragile watershed of the Canadian River.

This “preferred route” is hardly a single span of river or canyon. This proposal threatens mile after mile of the Canadian River watershed.

The Canadian Basin does not include a state park, but the Cross Bar Ranch lies immediately north of the proposed route, somewhat more than a mile. It is a Bureau of Land Management administered wilderness area immediately upstream from the Lake Meredith National Recreation Area. These towers will loom much larger from the Cross Bar than any other route would from Palo Duro Canyon State Park. People do not hike into this wilderness area expecting huge transmission towers, much less housing developments.

The size of the Canadian watershed far exceeds the headwater area of the Red River. Horned lizards, eagles, hawks, as well as the fragile riparian and rich woodland areas that sustain them are threatened. Also endangered will be numerous historic and prehistoric archeological sites. Observers have characterized Bonita Creek, West Amarillo Creek, and Tecovas Creek as virtually continuous archeological sites, both those that have been recorded as well as those yet to be discovered. Archeological surveys on the Cross Bar Wilderness Area substantiate this characterization.

Not only is the “preferred route” the worst choice where the fragile environmental and profound historical heritage of the Canadian River are concerned, the judge’s recommendation gives short shrift to the fact that the route itself is significantly longer and costlier to build than the routes recommended by the Public Utility Commission Staff and Sharyland’s environmental consultants. Unique, treasured Panhandle legacies are threatened by virtue of the unnecessary length alone – 50% longer than the routes recommended by the professionals.

The Commission remains the only arbiter empowered to sustain reason and avert needless destruction in the rugged Canadian “Breaks” that would endanger or obliterate part of the treasured, rich legacy and heritage encompassed there. Many are counting on you.

Respectfully,

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