

# **Canadian Basin Conservation**

## **INFORMATION SHEET**

### **Sharyland Utilities CREZ Proposals within the Canadian River Watershed**

This information is provided by **Canadian Basin Conservation**, an association of landowners and concerned citizens affected by proposed "CREZ" transmission lines within the watershed of the Canadian River. We regard ourselves as stewards of some of the richest and rarest riparian areas within the United States – certainly within the state of Texas. We need your help in advocating before the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) in the effort to protect the extensive archeology, paleontology, flora and fauna of this rich, delicate and increasingly threatened ecosystem.

The utilities code in conjunction with legislation in 2005 established Texas' Renewable Energy Program and directed the PUC to identify Competitive Renewable Energy Zones (CREZ) for construction of wind generation facilities. The CREZ project is the PUC's response to the legislative mandate to increase renewable energy production in Texas. These projects will bring the energy generated by wind farms located in the Panhandle, which is outside ERCOT, into the load centers within ERCOT (*The Electric Reliability Council of Texas*, the operator of most of the electric grid in Texas). The greatest part of the Panhandle is located in the Southwest Power Pool (SPP), which is *not* directly interconnected with the rest of the state located within the ERCOT grid. The SPP is under the jurisdiction of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) while ERCOT is not (except for limited reliability standards, not at issue in this matter.) The CREZ lines will *not* connect to any SPP transmission facilities such as those owned by Xcel/SPS. Instead the CREZ transmission lines will be part of ERCOT, not interconnected with any SPP transmission lines.

The PUC has identified areas to build wind farms. The transmission lines will be built in order to move electricity generated by renewable energy sources (mostly wind) from the remote parts of Texas (i.e., West Texas and the Texas Panhandle) to the more heavily populated areas of Texas (e.g., Austin, Dallas-Fort Worth, San Antonio).

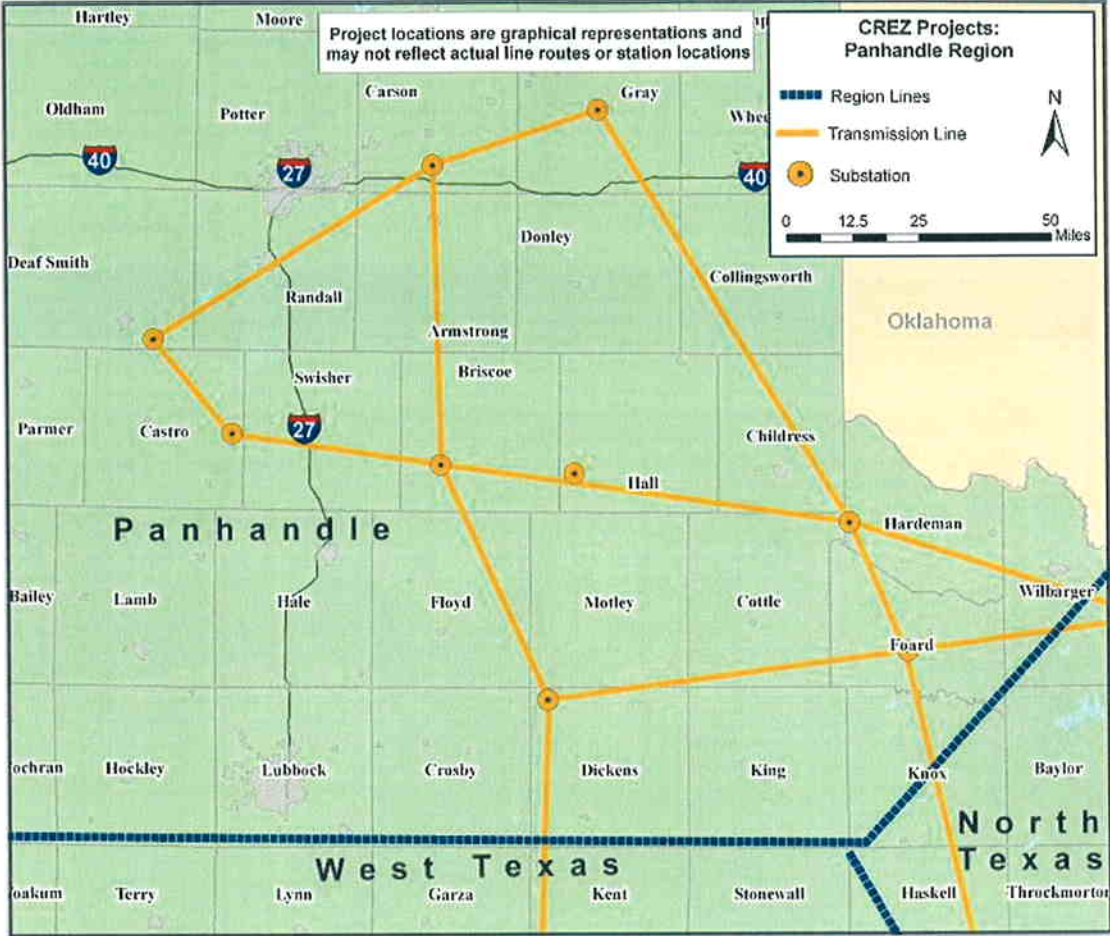
Additional information on the CREZ projects, including a description of the "CREZ" zones where the wind farms are to be located, can be found at:

<http://www.texascrezprojects.com/default.aspx>

**DEADLINE:** Sharyland Utilities will file its application with the Public Utility Commission for a Certificate of Convenience and Necessity (CCN) to build this line on Monday, June 14<sup>th</sup>. The application will contain several alternative routes, one of which will be designated by Sharyland as the "preferred route;" but it is very important to note that any noticed route can be approved by the PUC and built. It would be very desirable to have our letter submissions in by June 1, 2010.

**Please reference the correct case in your letter or submission: DOCKET 37138**

Below is a map depicting the Panhandle CREZ infrastructure that will be built. The portion of the project under consideration here is the line connecting the White Deer Station in Carson County with the Hereford Station in Deaf Smith County. The PUC selected Sharyland Utilities, L.P. to build this portion of the CREZ transmission project:



Mailing address for the Public Utility Commission:

**Chairman Barry Smitherman  
 Commissioner Donna L. Nelson  
 Commissioner Kenneth W. Anderson  
 Public Utility Commission of Texas  
 1701 N. Congress Ave.  
 P.O. Box 13326  
 Austin, TX 78711-3326**

(It is considered good form to address the commissioners directly by name – in the same letter.)

**PLEASE PROVIDE US A COPY OF YOUR SUBMISSIONS:**

**Mail: Canadian Basin Conservation**

P.O. Box 4108

Amarillo, TX 79116

Phone: 806-381-0202

**email:** nlouise78@gmail.com or whseewald@seewaldinvestments.net

**FACTS AND TALKING POINTS:**

You will find copies of the proposed CREZ line route maps attached to this document. There are two variants of a route north of Amarillo, essentially three variants of a route that goes between Amarillo and Canyon, and a sixth route running far south of Canyon. There has been considerable organizing to “protect” Palo Duro Canyon. None of the proposed routes actually traverse the state park. The focus of this organizing may be in the name of the park, but it more accurately involves real estate development within the headwaters immediately southeast of Amarillo.

☞ It is true that Palo Duro Canyon has significant public advocacy and that is absolutely a good thing. We can certainly all unite in the objective of protecting some of the most spectacular landscape in the country:

1. However, such advocacy becomes inaccurate and misleading when equating real estate developments around the Palo Duro headwaters on the southeastern edge of Amarillo with the State Park or the privately held portions of the grand sweep of the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River below the park.
2. All proposed routes assiduously avoid Palo Duro State Park.
3. The most direct route between the White Deer and Hereford Power Stations is a route lying between Amarillo and Canyon. While the contradictory PUC considerations for locating lines include avoiding habitable structures, the following are also included in the criteria they must consider:
  - a. The alternative routes should utilize or parallel existing transmission lines, gas pipelines, roads, property lines, natural features, or any other compatible right-of-way.
  - b. Avoid or minimize impact on streams, rivers, wetlands, etc.
  - c. Cost - The lower the better; and *generally* the shorter the length of a route, the cheaper it is to build.
  - d. Community Values: There is considerable constituency for protecting both river systems and the river breaks that provide the landscapes, wildlife and flora precious to plains people.

☞ It is simply fallacious to try to make the case that areas of increasingly intense real estate development in the headwaters of the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River are somehow more worthy of protection or more significant than the great watershed of the Canadian River north of the city of Amarillo:

1. The Canadian River is one of the richest archeological and paleontological areas in the country, including important Antelope Focus Pueblo sites and Native American flint quarries.
2. The Canadian watershed also includes significant cultural sites such as the Fort Bascom Trail and Tecovas Springs on the Frying Pan Ranch. Numerous 'plazas' were built along the Canadian River by New Mexican pastores during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. They drove their sheep to summer pasture in the Panhandle and built dry stone compounds for themselves and their livestock.
3. The Canadian River watershed provides critical sanctuary for both migratory and native bird species. Power lines are a known threat to the bird population.

☞ The prime areas for wind farming remain on the high ground of the Llano Estacado, not in the breaks of either of the two large rivers traversing the Panhandle. Those who advocate one particular route in the belief that its proximity would help promote wind farming are pursuing flawed logic:

1. The massive transmission line being permitted in this hearing (towers as tall as 16 stories) represents the connection between nodes on the electric grid. Nothing will connect directly to this line.
2. Any feeder lines to wind farms would almost certainly come from the White Deer and Hereford Stations that this line will connect together. There is no proposal for an intermediate station.
3. The location of those stations is not an issue at this point. They have already been located by the PUC.

### **IMPORTANT NOTES:**

1. The CREZ permitting process is expedited legislatively. The PUC must select one route to be built no less than 181 days after the June 14<sup>th</sup> filing. Directly affected landowners will have only 30 days to file a motion to intervene, and the evidentiary hearing will be held approximately three months after the filing. Additionally, the applicants for the CREZ routes are not required to demonstrate a 'need' for the line as would normally be the case. The CREZ legislation presumes the need.

2. It is not our mission to promote any particular route. But it may be important to many of us that the intermediate route running north of the Palisades and Tanglewood is the sole route that completely minimizes impact on either river system. Notwithstanding that the routes between Amarillo and Canyon represent some of the more populated areas under consideration, the area already has considerable electric infrastructure and that routing would provide the shortest distance and the least lineal feet of power line between the two end-points.

3. We are sympathetic with the effects these CREZ proposals could represent for private real estate development. We look forward to supporting any efforts to minimize that impact consistent with the first priority of protection for both of these rivers and the critical habitat they support.