

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

**Decision Record
Environmental Assessment
DOI-BLM-CA-D080-2015-0023
January 2016**

Highway 127 Baker to NTC Project

Location: Baker, California

***Applicant/Address: AT&T
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Introduction and Background

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has conducted an environmental analysis DOI-BLM-CA-D080-2015-0023 for a proposed action to address installation of a buried fiber optic line in the Baker area in San Bernardino County. The project would include the installation of approximately 12.25 miles of Fiber Optic Cable (FOC) within previously disturbed areas (Route). The majority of the route roughly parallels Highway 127, also known as State Route (SR-) 127 on the west side of SR 127, and proceeds from the intersection of Mill Road and Baker Boulevard, located southwest of the community of Baker, to the northeast to Cell Tower Site 9 on Fort Irwin. The proposed project is to provide needed bandwidth and reliability to support the Shoshone Central Office's cellular network and National Training Centers Combat Training Center – Instrumentation System Range at NTC. The underlying need for the proposal would be met while accomplishing the following objective: Installation of a FOC in an underground conduit from Baker CA, to a Cell Tower on Fort Irwin National Training Center.

The "Highway 127 Baker to NTC Project" project area is 45,487 feet long and 10 feet wide and encompasses 10.442 acres and is located near Baker, California. Legal description is as follows:

San Bernardino Base Meridian, California
T. 14 N., R. 8 E., Sec 1: W1/2 Lot 1 of NE1/4;
T. 14 N., R. 8 E., Sec 1: W1/2 Lot 2 of NE1/4;
T. 14 N., R. 8 E., Sec 1: W1/2 SE 1/4;
T. 14 N., R. 8 E., Sec 12: W1/2 NE1/4, SE1/4 NW1/4,
E1/2 SW1/4, SW1/4 SE1/4;
T. 14 N., R. 8 E., Sec 13: W1/2 NE1/4, W1/2, SE1/4;
T. 14 N., R. 8 E., Sec 24: W1/2 NE1/4, SE1/4 NE1/4, E1/2 SE1/4;
T. 15 N., R. 8 E., Sec 20: N1/2 SW1/4, SE1/4 SW1/4, SW1/4 SE1/4;
T. 15 N., R. 8 E., Sec 21: SE1/4 SW1/4, S1/2 SE1/4;
T. 15 N., R. 8 E., Sec 22: SW1/4 SW1/4, N1/2 SW1/4,
N1/2 SE1/4, SE1/4 SE1/4.

EA# DOI-BLM-CA-D080-2015-0023 is attached for this Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). A no action alternative and one action alternatives were analyzed in the EA.

Decision

It is my decision to authorize a Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) right-of-way to AT&T for the installation of a Fiber Optic Cable (FOC). This decision is contingent on AT&T's applicable environmental commitments as outlined in the Stipulation.

Authority: The authorities for permitting the action is contained in FLPMA, Title V.

Compliance and Monitoring:

Potential resource conflicts were resolved through environmental commitments as described in the EA. A qualified biologist shall be present during all construction activities and will monitor any potential impacts to sensitive species. A qualified cultural monitor shall be present during all construction activities.

Terms/Conditions/Stipulations:

The proposed action was analyzed in the EA. Terms, conditions and stipulation as a result of the analysis is attached as Exhibit A.

PLAN CONFORMANCE AND CONSISTENCY:

The Proposed Action is subject to and in conformance with the California Desert Conservation Area Plan of 1980 (as Amended).

This proposed action is in accordance with the Federal Lands Policy and Management Act, which provides for systems for transmission or reception of radio, television, telephone, telegraph, and other electronic signals, and other means of communication (Title V, Section 501(4) and in conformance with the California Desert Conservation Area Plan of 1980 (as Amended).

The California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) Plan, 1980, as amended, including the Northern and Eastern Mojave Management Plan of 2002 is the overriding Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land use plan for the affected area. The CDCA Plan has identified public lands in this area as Multiple-Use Class Limited (L) and Moderate (M). Multiple-Use Class L provides for generally lower-intensity, carefully controlled multiple use of resources, while ensuring that sensitive resources are not significantly diminished. Multiple-Use Class M is based upon a controlled balance between higher intensity use and protection of public lands. This class provides for a wide variety of present and future uses such as mining, livestock grazing, recreation, energy, and utility development. Class M management is also designed to conserve desert resources and to mitigate damage to those resources which permitted uses may cause.

Preferred Alternative: Under the preferred Alternative, a FOC would be installed from the intersection of Mill Road and Baker Boulevard southwest of the community of Baker along the west side of SR-127, along the haul road and to the east boundary of Fort Irwin National Training Center. The installation would include trenching and placing new direct-buried 1.5-inch diameter, high-density polyethylene ducts, or conduit, bundled together at a depth of approximately 4 feet.

No Action Alternative: Under the No Action Alternative, no new FOC would be installed and operate under the existing system; however, the system would have limited capacity and reliability.

Alternatives Considered but not Selected: An Alternative Route Alignment was considered involving the installation of the cable on the east-side shoulder of SR-127. Due to a conflict from

the close proximity of existing Southern California Edison facilities within the alternative alignment, the alternative alignment is not considered feasible.

The Wireless Connection Alternative would consist of replacing and upgrading AT&T's current system at the Shoshone Central Office with additional microwave transmitters. Implementation of this alternative would result in higher costs of equipment and maintenance.

Decision and Rational: One comment was received from California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to include Caltrans District 9 request that AT&T needs to request a Encroachment Permit from them, to be included on the added to the Spill Notification Contact List, Jurisdictional Delineation Report, Applicable Permits. Based on Information in the EA, the project record, and consultation with my staff, I have decided to implement the project as described in the EA with the inclusion of the requested items from Caltrans. The project is not expected to adversely impact any resources.

Protest/Appeal Language: Administrative remedies may be available to those who believe they will be adversely affected by this decision. Appeals may be made to the Office of Hearings and Appeals, Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Interior, Board of Land Appeals (Board) in strict compliance with the regulations in 43 CFR Part 4. Notices of appeal must be filed in this office within 30 days after publication of this decision. If a notice of appeal does not include a statement of reasons, such statement must be filed with this office and the Board within 30 days after the notice of appeal is filed. The notice of appeal and any statement of reasons, written arguments, or briefs must also be served upon the Regional Solicitor, Pacific Southwest Region, U.S. Department of Interior, 2800 Cottage Way, E-1712, Sacramento, CA 95825.

The effective date of this decision (and the date initiating the appeal period) will be the date this notice of decision is posted on BLM's (Barstow Field Office) internet website.

Authorized Officer

Kathleen Seymour
Barstow Field Manager

Date

2/19/16

Attachments: Map(s), Comment, Exhibit A