



United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park
Post Office Box 52
Hawaii National Park, HI 96718

IN REPLY REFER TO:
HAVO 1.A.2

December 18, 2023

Aloha kākou,

Hawai'i Electric Light Company (HELCO), in consultation with Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park (HVNP), is in the process of planning how to relocate and upgrade existing utility poles and power lines associated with a portion of the HELCO 3400 Line located within the HVNP. The project area is within HVNP, which is a unit of the National Park Service (NPS), and includes an area between Pi'i Mauna Drive and the Hilo-side park boundary near Old Volcano Road. The project is considered Phase 3 of HELCO's efforts to upgrade and harden the 3400 Line which spans from Puna to the park's Ka'ū entrance. Phase 1 and 2 included an area between the Kīlauea Switching Station outside the Ka'ū side boundary of the park to Pi'i Mauna Drive and was completed in 2020.

After discussions among HVNP and HELCO, NPS determined that under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), an environmental assessment (EA) should be prepared to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the project. HVNP is working closely with HELCO and Tetra Tech, Inc. in developing and analyzing alternatives, developing mitigation measures, and conducting consultations. As part of the consultation process, HVNP is initiating the scoping process under NEPA to determine the extent and nature of issues and alternatives that should be considered in the EA.

The primary purpose of the 3400 Line relocation project is to relocate, upgrade, and bring up to code the sub-transmission electric utility poles and power lines. The update will allow for improved capacity, lower impedance, as well as to make the poles and lines more resistant to weather events. The improved capacity will provide for more flexible system operation and maintenance (switching) and allow the 3400 Line to more reliably serve the HVNP. Another important purpose of the relocation, from its current location to the proposed alignment along Highway 11 (Volcano Highway), is for improved access and safety. Existing poles and lines are located along a corridor within hazardous terrain, including earth cracks and lava tubes. Maintenance and repairs are currently difficult and unsafe. Finally, we anticipate relocating the line along the highway will also help reduce potential impacts to the forested areas in HVNP.

To address the purpose and need, HELCO and NPS propose two main actions:

1. Relocating the existing power line by installing new poles and transmission and distribution lines along 2.6 miles of Highway 11; and
2. Removing and/or decommissioning approximately 2.6 miles of existing poles and transmission and distribution lines within the current power line alignment in HVNP.

HVNP encourages public participation during the NEPA process. We are requesting input regarding the project, including concerns related to environmental resources, as well as relevant information that should be considered in the evaluation. We are offering three ways to provide your feedback:

- Online: Visit <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/Phase3> for project information to submit your comment online.
- Email: Email comments to havo_planning@nps.com.
- Hard copy: Mail written comments to the following address:
Attn: 3400 Phase 3 Power Line Relocation
Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park
P.O. Box 52
Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, HI 96718-0052

Comments must be submitted online, via email, or postmarked by January 18, 2024 to be considered in the Draft EA.

Thank you for your participation in the environmental review process for the proposed project.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Loh
Superintendent

Cc:
Michael Iwahashi, HELCO Project Manager
Aaron Gonzalez, HELCO Sr. Designer
Tiffany Agostini, Tetra Tech Project Manager