



Tri-State drops monument transmission line proposal

By J.R. Logan

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Just two months after designation of the Rio Grande del Norte National Monument, wholesale power supplier Tri-State Generation and Transmission announced it was considering a proposal to bring a high-capacity power line through at least part of the newly protected landscape.

Local residents like Bill Brown saw the idea as contrary to the spirit of the presidential protections, and they mounted their opposition early.

“We set up early for a long fight,” Brown said.

But as of it looks like that fight isn’t going to happen. At least not now.

Tri-State announced in late March it was nixing the proposal to bring the line across the monument.

“After careful consideration of the Monument designation and review of technical, financial, regulatory, and environmental criteria ... Tri-State has decided not to pursue development of the [line],” reads a statement from power supplier.

The proposed line would have originated near Alamosa, Colo., passed through parts of the Rio Grande del Norte, and connected to an existing transmission line west of Taos.

Activists who pushed for designation of the monument voiced fierce opposition to Tri-State’s proposal and vowed to fight it.

The proclamation establishing the monument left the door open for these sorts of projects, but officials with the Bureau of Land Management — the agency that oversees the monument — said it would be extremely difficult for Tri-State to get the line approved.

“I don’t think they expected the opposition that they got,” Brown said.

Tri-State says it has spent a decade trying to find a “longterm solution to the electric reliability needs of the San Luis Valley.”

Other efforts, like a proposal to construct a similar line east out of the San Luis Valley over La Veta Pass, already failed, in large part because of the opposition of billionaire Louis Bacon, who owns a massive ranch in southern Colorado.

Coincidentally, Bacon officially bought Taos Ski Valley last year. He did not publicly voice any opinions on the Rio Grande del Norte proposal before it was dropped.