



February 17, 2026

Craig Johnson
Director of Policy and Strategy / General Counsel
Colorado Rural Electric Association

Dear Craig,

In response to your request for examples of project delays or adverse impacts related to U.S. Forest Service (USFS) or Bureau of Land Management (BLM) permitting, Mountain Parks Electric, Inc. (MPEI) respectfully submits the following example for consideration and inclusion in materials being prepared by the House of Natural Resources Committee.

USFS Permitting Delay: Walton Peak (DHSEM/FEMA Project)

MPEI's Powerline Wildfire Mitigation Project (Award # HMGP 4498-21R-MPEI) includes seven project locations. The only remaining permit needed to keep the project on schedule is the USFS Special Use Permit for the Walton Peak site. The permit application was originally submitted on August 25, 2022. Despite ongoing coordination with our local U.S. Forest Service office, the application remains under review and pending.

Senator Bennet's office contacted the Kremmling USDA office regarding this outstanding permit on December 9, 2025. Bennet's office received a response on January 6, 2026, stating that work had been "re-initiated" on the Special Use Authorization and that the agency "is committed to completing MPEI's application" to ensure we could fulfill our grant obligations.

This delay directly affects our ability to complete a time sensitive wildfire mitigation project with a current federal grant deadline of February 1, 2027.

While the above example responds specifically to USFS permitting challenges, MPEI has also experienced significant federal funding delays relating to this DHSEM/FEMA Powerline Wildfire Mitigation Project that merit coordinated attention from both CREA and NRECA.

The delays associated with our DHSEM/FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP 4498-21R) award present an urgent concern. This application was originally submitted in January 2023. Phase 1 was executed in September 2024, successfully completed, and fully closed out in May 2025. Phase 2 documentation was transmitted by Colorado's FEMA Region 8 office to FEMA headquarters in October 2025 following a comprehensive state review. Since that time, no federal action has occurred.

The most pressing issue is time. The current grant performance deadline is February 1, 2027, placing the \$8.3 million federal investment at risk. MPEI has already experienced more than three years of administrative delay and is now entering its fourth summer construction season without authorization to proceed. Our service territory spans high-altitude, mountainous terrain ranging from approximately 7,500 to 11,000 feet, which severely limits our construction window. Harsh winds, sub-zero temperatures, frozen ground, and early snow routinely compress our effective construction season to only a few summer months. Each missed construction season significantly increases both schedule risk and cost exposure.

Over the past year, MPEI has actively advocated for progress through multiple channels, including outreach to our congressional delegation and regional partners (i.e. Carbon Power and Light in Wyoming). Correspondence has been submitted to Secretary Noem, Congressman Neguse, and Senators Hickenlooper and Bennet; however, these efforts have not yet resulted in federal action. We would be glad to share those materials or any supporting documentation that may be helpful in advancing coordinated advocacy efforts.

We appreciate CREA's assistance in working with NRECA to elevate these concerns and help engage federal partners to move these grants forward. Your leadership and coordinated advocacy would play a critical role in ensuring that these essential rural infrastructure investments are not lost to administrative delay.

Thank you for your continued support of Colorado's rural electric cooperatives.

Sincerely,

Mountain Parks Electric, Inc.



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