Final EIS and the Blended Alternative and met with and briefed numerous stakeholders including elected officials, lake associations, and conservation and environmental groups.

A total of 215 comment forms and 27 letters were received on the Final EIS. Most of these comments were similar to the comments that TVA received on the Draft EIS, except for those that commented specifically on the Blended Alternative. In general, the public supported the Blended Alternative and viewed it as a substantial improvement over TVA's earlier preferred alternative, Alternative C1. A number of commenters suggested modifications to some of the Blended Alternative standards (*e.g.*, increasing the width of the SMZ), but these were within the range of alternatives previously considered.

Decision

The TVA Board decided to modify the Blended Alternative to include a 50-foot SMZ (an increase from 25 feet in the Final EIS). Other components of the Blended Alternative were adopted. The Blended Alternative appropriately balances residential shoreline development, recreation use, and resource conservation needs in a way that maintains the quality of life and other important values provided by the reservoir system. It recognizes the reality that previous decisions have already opened up 38 percent of TVA's shorelands to access, but commits to holding the line at this level and possibly ''gaining'' back some of the already opened lands in a way that would heighten their protection. The Blended Alternative also responds well to the public comments TVA received during the EIS process because it combines features from other alternatives that were generally supported, while not incorporating features that were controversial and highly objectionable to some segments of the public. During the period following publication of the Final EIS, a number of organizations questioned the adequacy of the 25-foot SMZ. These included the Department of the Interior, Kentucky Department for Fish and Wildlife Resources, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Tennessee Conservation League, and Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning. In response to these comments, the Board decided to increase the size of the SMZ to 50 feet in order to further protect the Tennessee River system.

TVA will include the Blended Alternative standards in its permitting regulations. The standards and policies identified in the Blended Alternative, as modified by the April 21, 1999, Board of Directors decision, apply to all TVA reservoirs and become effective November 1, 1999.

Environmentally Preferable Alternative

TVA has concluded that Alternative D, which seeks minimum disturbance along shoreline available for residential access and does not allow additional shoreland to be opened, is the environmentally preferable alternative. However, the purpose of SMI is to better protect the environment while allowing reasonable access to the shoreline by adjacent residents who hold outstanding access rights. The Blended Alternative better addresses the broader objectives of SMI and is also substantially better environmentally than current practices.

Environmental Consequences and Commitments

The Blended Alternative advances TVA's commitment to resource stewardship and habitat protection through strong conservation approaches, including a shoreline inventory and categorization system designed to protect certain significant habitats. By limiting future residential access to shorelines where private access rights already exist and emphasizing the need to ''maintain and gain'' public shoreline, TVA is offering a much higher degree of protection to public shorelines than it has offered in the past. The Blended Alternative was formulated using environmentally protective measures. These measures include:

- Protection of sensitive natural and cultural resources through a shoreline inventory and categorization system designating residential access shorelines into protection, mitigation, and managed categories.
- Promotion of conservation easements across shorelands to protect scenic landscapes, encourage clustered development, or to provide other public benefits.
- Promotion of best management practices for the construction of docks, management of vegetation, stabilization of shoreline erosion, and other shoreline alterations.
- Emphasis on education activities and incentives as important components of shoreline management.

With the implementation of the above environmental protection measures, TVA has determined that adverse environmental impacts of future residential shoreline uses would be substantially reduced. These protective measures represent all of the practicable measures to avoid or minimize environmental harm that are associated with this alternative. Alternative D has associated with it additional protective measures such as a lower dock profile, less vegetation clearing, and a prohibition on channel excavation. This alternative was rejected for the reasons given above.

As the components of TVA's new shoreline management policy are implemented, TVA will continue to work with all affected interests to promote environmentally sound stewardship of public shorelands. TVA will also monitor shoreline development trends in order to identify any actions that may become necessary in the future.

Dated: May 24, 1999.

Ruben O. Hernandez,

Vice President, Resource Stewardship.

[FR Doc. 99–14199 Filed 6–3–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8120–08–U

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

Request for Comments Concerning Compliance by Germany With Telecommunications Trade Agreements

AGENCY: Office of the United States Trade Representative.

ACTION: Notice of request for public comment.

SUMMARY: Pursuant to section 1377 of the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988 (19 U.S.C. 3107), the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) is reviewing, and requests comments on, compliance by Germany with its commitments under the World Trade Organization (WTO) Basic Telecommunications Agreement.

DATES: Comments are due by noon on Wednesday, June 16, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Comments must be submitted to Gloria Blue, Executive Secretary, Trade Policy Staff Committee, ATTN: Section 1377 Comments, Office of the United States Trade Representative, 600 17th Street, NW, Washington, DC 20508.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: William Corbett, Office of Industry, (202) 395–9586; or Demetrios Marantis, Office of the General Counsel, (202) 395–3581.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 1377 of the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988 requires the USTR to review annually, by March 31, the operation and effectiveness of all U.S. trade agreements regarding telecommunications products and services of the United States that are in

force with respect to the United States. The purpose of the review is to determine whether any act, policy, or practice of a country that has entered into a telecommunications trade agreement is not in compliance with the terms of such agreement, or otherwise denies to U.S. firms, within the context of the terms of such agreements, mutually advantageous market opportunities.

Beginning in the second quarter of 1998 and after concluding a number of satisfactory interconnection agreements with early new entrants to the German telecommunications market, Deutsche Telekom (DT) appears to have slowed the pace of interconnection negotiations and imposed tougher rates, terms and conditions for subsequent prospective entrants. All new entrants have no option but to interconnect with the DT network to access the German market, and Germany committed to assure non-discriminatory and cost-oriented interconnection rates, terms and conditions by adopting the WTO Reference Paper as part of its obligations under the WTO Basic Telecommunications Agreement.

The 1999 review under section 1377, completed on March 30, 1999, established that the delay in assuring non-discriminatory and cost-oriented interconnection rates, terms, and conditions raises serious doubts about Germany's compliance with its WTO commitments. The USTR noted that regulatory proceedings in Germany during April-May 1999 were expected to set important precedents in determining interconnection rates, terms, and conditions for all competitors to Deutsche Telekom. These proceedings related to (1) a complaint by a U.S. carrier, Econophone and, (2) a proposal for new tariff surcharges by Deutsche Telekom. The USTR announced it would monitor the outcome of these proceedings, which have now concluded to determine whether Germany is acting in accordance with its WTO obligations, and to determine whether to pursue WTO dispute settlement action thereafter if the outcome of the proceedings was not consistent with those obligations.

Therefore, the USTR seeks comments on Germany's compliance with its specific commitments under the WTO Basic Telecommunications Agreement or with other WTO obligations, *e.g.*, the WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), including the Annex on Telecommunications, that affect market opportunities for U.S. telecommunications products and services.

WTO Basic Telecommunications Agreement

The GATS contains general obligations that apply to all Members and services whether or not listed in WTO Members' schedules and specific obligations that apply only to services scheduled by a Member. The Fourth Protocol to the GATS is the legal instrument embodying seventy WTO members' basic telecommunications services commitments under the GATS. The Fourth Protocol is generally referred to as the WTO Basic Telecommunications Agreement. The agreement entered into force on February 6, 1998.

The WTO Basic Telecommunications Agreement encompasses commitments in three areas: market access, national treatment, and pro-competitive regulatory principles (contained in the WTO Reference Paper). Germany committed to provide open market access for local, long-distance and international service and service suppliers of any other Member under the terms, limitations and conditions agreed and specified in its WTO services schedule. With respect to national treatment, Germany committed to ensure treatment no less favorable to U.S. services or service suppliers than the treatment provided to services or service suppliers of Germany. Finally, the pro-competitive regulatory principles, set forth in the WTO Reference Paper and incorporated in Germany's (and other members') schedule, committed it to establish an independent regulatory body, ensure interconnection at non-discriminatory and cost-oriented rates, maintain measures to prevent anti-competitive practices such as cross-subsidization, and mandate transparency of government regulations and licensing.

The USTR seeks comment on whether Germany has made the necessary legislative or regulatory changes to implement its commitments, or permits acts, policies, or practices in its markets that do not appear to be in compliance with these commitments. In addition, the USTR seeks comments on whether Germany permits acts, policies, or practices that do not appear to be in compliance with other WTO obligations, e.g., the GATS, that affect market opportunities for telecommunications products and services of the United States.

Public Comment: Requirements for Submissions

The USTR requests comments on the operation and effectiveness of the WTO Basic Telecommunications Agreement with respect to Germany. All comments must be in English, identify on the first page of the comments the telecommunications trade agreement(s) discussed therein, be addressed to Gloria Blue, Executive Secretary, TPSC, ATTN: Section 1377 Comments, Trade Policy Staff Committee, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, and be submitted in 15 copies by noon on Wednesday, June 16, 1999.

All comments will be placed in the USTR Reading Room for inspection shortly after the filing deadline, except business confidential information exempt from public inspection in accordance with 15 CFR 2003.6. Confidential information submitted in accordance with 15 CFR 2003.6, must be clearly marked ''BUSINESS CONFIDENTIAL'' in a contrasting color ink at the top of each page on each of the 15 copies, and must be accompanied by 15 copies of a nonconfidential summary of the confidential information. The nonconfidential summary will be placed in the USTR Public Reading Room.

An appointment to review the comments may be made by calling Brenda Webb at (202) 395–6186. The USTR Reading Room is open to the public from 9:30 a.m. to 12 noon, and from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, and is located in Room 101.

Frederick L. Montgomery,

Chairman, Trade Policy Staff Committee.

[FR Doc. 99–14132 Filed 6–3–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3190–01–M

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Office of the Secretary

Announcement of Public Forum on Risk Assessment

AGENCY: Office of the Secretary, DOT.

ACTION: Announcement of Public Forum on Risk Assessment.

TIME AND DATE: 1:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m., June 16, 1999.

PLACE: Room 10234, Nassif Building, Department of Transportation, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590.

STATUS: Open to public with attendance limited to space available.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the forum is to have an exchange of ideas and to start a dialogue that will better enable the Department to analyze its rules. We do not want comments on specific rules or proposals, although it would be appropriate to use an existing rule to illustrate a point.