

Public Hearing on
Energy Policy Act—Section 368
Energy Corridors in the West:
Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

Speakers who asked that their name and address or just their address be withheld from the public record have that information replaced by xxxxx's.

Denver, Colorado, January 31, 2008, 2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

LaVerne Kyriss: Good afternoon. I'd invite everyone to come on in and find a place to sit down. And I believe we're live on the Web.

So, I'd like to thank you for joining us for a public hearing on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement on Designating Energy Corridors on Federal Lands in the West. I'm LaVerne Kyriss from the Department of Energy. I will serve as today's hearing officer.

Before we begin the formal hearing, Duane Spencer, who is the acting deputy state director for Energy Lands and Minerals for the Bureau of Land Management, will make a brief opening statement.

But first, if you haven't signed in or let us know that you want to speak at this meeting, you can do so right now at the registration table just outside.

We also have handout materials for you. There's a project fact sheet that looks like this, with a map on the back, and another longer sheet that has a sample of our siting process. Those are available for you.

Restrooms are also located out by the registration table.

In the event of a fire or other alarm, we'd ask you to please take your personal belongings with you and evacuate the building as quickly, quietly and safely as possible. And that would be out through the lobby.

With us today representing the federal interagency team managing this work are Glen Parker from Forest Service, right back here. And next to him, Ron Montagna from BLM. We also have local Forest Service and BLM staff here who can talk to you about local issues.

And now, I'm going to turn the mic over to Duane.

Duane Spencer: Good afternoon. Welcome everyone. Want to start by apologizing for the somewhat wooden introduction, but it makes the lawyers too nervous if we deviate from the canned statement. So, if I'm reading, I really am reading here.

So, thanks for coming out to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the designation of energy transport corridors on federal lands in the West. In a few moments you'll hear a brief presentation about the document, which the Departments of Interior, Energy, and Agriculture are preparing to meet requirements in the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

Currently, applications for rights-of-ways to cross federal lands with pipelines or electric transmission infrastructure are considered on a case by case basis, without much coordination among the various federal agencies whose lands are often involved in projects that transport energy across long distances.

In 2005, Congress directed federal agencies to address this coordination situation by designating energy transport corridors, and also performing the necessary reviews of the environmental impacts of designations. A Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement developed under the National Environmental Policy Act represents that environmental review.

It's important to note that another round of site-specific NEPA analysis will be completed for each project proposed for a location in a designated corridor. The Department of Energy, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service developed the corridor locations proposed in the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement using a three-step process which is detailed in the document, in a handout available on the information table, and which the presentation will also describe.

In essence, today's hearing represents Step Four in that process. Public comments will help the agencies further refine the location of corridors so that important goals of the project are met, balancing the need to improve energy delivery in the West with our responsibility to protect the many resources found on federal lands.

From the beginning, the agencies have committed to this strategy, and your comments will be valuable in helping to insure that it is carried through to the end of this planning effort.

The representatives from DOE, BLM, and Forest Service are here to receive your comments. And on behalf of all three of these agencies, thank you for your interest and your participation.

LaVerne Kyriss:

Thank you, Duane.

We're here to receive your oral comments on the Draft PEIS. You can also submit comments via the project website, by fax, or by mail.

This hearing is being webcast and transcribed, so speakers are asked to speak clearly and distinctly into the microphone. If you are having trouble hearing a speaker in this room, please signal me and I'll notify that speaker accordingly. After everyone who wishes to comment has spoken, I'll close the hearing. So far, we have about a half a dozen people who request to speak to this issue today. Each of you will have an initial five minutes to make your presentation. When you have 30 seconds remaining, I'll notify you so you can wrap up.

The hearing is to take comments on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement prepared in response to directions given by Congress to five federal agencies: Energy, Agriculture, Interior, Commerce, and Defense. Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 directs the secretaries to designate corridors for oil, gas, and hydrogen pipe lines, and electric transmission lines on federal lands in the 11 western states; to perform necessary environmental reviews. Partly because of this requirement, we decided to prepare the Draft PEIS that's the subject of this hearing and to incorporate these designations into land-use, land management, or equivalent plans. A separate and distinct public process is expected to begin later this year to identify corridors in the other 39 states.

The statute requires that when the secretaries designate these corridors, they must specify the corridor centerline, the corridor width, and compatible uses. Congress also directed the secretaries to take into account the need for electric transmission facilities to improve reliability, relieve congestion, and enhance the capacity of the national grid to deliver electricity.

The Draft PEIS proposes designating more than 6,000 miles of corridors: Sixty-two percent would be on existing locally-designated corridors and/or rights-of-way; 86 percent would be on BLM land; and 11 percent on Forest Service land. The Draft PEIS identifies 166 proposed corridor segments in all 11 western states. If all of these are included in the follow-on decisions, this would involve amending 165 land-use or equivalent plans.

Previously designated corridors are outlined in yellow on the project maps. Some of these are proposed for upgrade only. In the case of existing previously designated utility corridors, amendments to land-use plans designating these as 368 corridors would subject these to the interagency coordination processes described in the PEIS, and they would be assigned Section 368 criteria; in effect, centerline, width, and compatible purposes.

Using existing corridors alone would not meet the requirements of Section 368; so, we've identified an additional 2,300 miles of proposed corridors. The proposed corridors also vary in width. We used a 3,500 foot starting point to provide flexibility for siting multiple rights-of-way.

An energy corridor is defined as a parcel of land identified through a land-use planning process as a preferred location for existing and future utility rights-of-way, and that is suitable to accommodate one or more rights-of-way which are similar, identical, or compatible. Corridor designations assist in minimizing adverse impacts and the proliferation of separate rights-of-way.

A right-of-way is a specific land-use authorization—not a change in ownership—granted to allow construction and operation of a specific project that's often linear in character, such as a utility line or a roadway.

Rights-of-way permits include the requirements for compatible land-uses and are not granted until a project applicant has complied with all the relevant requirements, including the appropriate environmental review.

In November 2007, we published the Draft PEIS. Comments are due February 14th. We will analyze and respond to the comments and complete the tasks necessary to prepare a final PEIS. We expect to have this ready sometime in mid-2008.

The land management agencies will be able to sign records of decision to designate corridors through amendments to land-use plans no sooner than 30 days after the final PEIS is issued.

The Draft PEIS analyzed two alternatives: taking No Action and the proposed alternative. Choosing to adopt the No Action alternative would result in continuing ad hoc, uncoordinated development as is done now. The proposed action is the result of a three-step corridor siting process described in detail in Chapter Two of the Draft PEIS.

The first step was to incorporate comments provided by the public during scoping and after the draft map was released in 2006. Then the agencies worked closely with local land managers to accommodate local land-use priorities, incorporate local knowledge of the areas, and avoid areas known to be incompatible with potential future development. A handout summarizing this process for determining where the proposed corridors would be located is on the information table. Examples of specific corridors are also available on the project website.

We believe that the analysis of these alternatives meets NEPA's requirement for a hard look. Because the proposed action does not involve any site-specific, ground-disturbing

activities, site-specific NEPA compliance will be required to support all proposed projects within a 368-designated corridor.

And today, we don't know when and where any projects will be proposed by applicants seeking to site pipelines or transmission lines. As a result of this uncertainty, the environmental effects described in Chapter Three of the Draft PEIS are necessarily more general than a site-specific analysis for a known project would be.

Comments will be most useful if they're specific, if include suggested changes or methodologies, they provide a rationale for your suggestions, and refer to the specific page number or section of the Draft PEIS.

Finally, we encourage you to submit your comments via the project website. It's easy for you, it speeds our ability to get comments into the database for analysis, and up on the website for public review. And it doesn't require stamps or envelopes.

Now, for today's hearing process. I will call speakers in the order in which you registered. We'd ask you to please step up to the microphone right here and clearly state your name and your organization, if you're representing one, before you make your comments. Please limit your oral comments to five minutes so that everyone who wants to speak today may have a chance to be heard. I will advise you when you have 30 seconds left so you can wrap up. And I have this sign.

We'll repeat this process until everyone who's registered to speak has had a chance to provide comments. I'll then ask if anyone else wants to speak. After those people have had a chance to speak, we'll go back and find out if anybody who's already commented wants to supplement their comments. We'll do that until everybody has said everything they want to. After that, we'll close the hearing and remind you of when comments are due and how to submit them.

If you're speaking from a prepared statement, we'd also ask you to please leave a copy with us at the registration desk. If you're not prepared to do that today, we'd ask you to send it to us via the project website.

Agency representatives won't be answering questions during the hearing, but we will stay afterwards to discuss the Draft PEIS with you.

Are there any questions on the process we're going to use today for taking comments? I don't see any questions. So, if there are no questions on the process we'll use today we'll now begin taking your comments.

Our first speaker will be Kurt Kunkle. Kurt will be followed by James Lockhart.

Kurt Kunkle:

Hi. My name is Kurt Kunkle. I represent the Colorado Environmental Coalition. We have 4,500 individual members in Colorado, and about 100 organizational members, in total representing tens of thousands of Colorado citizens.

I kind of like the idea of designating energy corridors. It gives the public and the federal land managing agencies the opportunity to guide development in appropriate places and avoid willy-nilly placement of rights-of-way and transmission lines and the like across our lands.

Our primary concern in the corridor designation process is protecting proposed wilderness areas. We have in Colorado many proposed wilderness areas on BLM and Forest Service lands. And in looking at the maps, it appears that the Colorado federal land managers have done a pretty good job of avoiding the majority of our special places.

There are a few places where there are minor overlaps with proposed wilderness. Those proposed wilderness areas include the Yampa River proposed wilderness area, Roan Plateau proposed wilderness area, South Shale Ridge, San Miguel River, Badger Creek, and also the Curecanti National Recreation Area.

It seems that the lines drawn to represent the corridors, the width of the corridor kind of bleeds over into the edge of proposed wilderness areas. And we think with minor adjustments to the corridor width that overlap and conflict can be avoided pretty easily.

The corridors also go within a mile of several BLM wilderness study areas. We'd like to make sure that the distance from the wilderness study areas is maintained. The wilderness study areas [inaudible].

Further, we have several—sort of a list of concerns and improvements that might be made to the designation of corridors to better serve public land, just protecting our environment. We'd like to make sure that new pipelines or power lines are actually needed. We'd like to make sure that federal lands are necessary locations and special or sensitive lands are avoided altogether. We'd like to make sure that projects are subject to best management practices and—in order to limit damage to other resources, recreation and Colorado's famous beautiful lands.

We'd like to make sure that risks to federal and other affected lands are realistically and thoroughly assessed so that those risks can then be avoided and minimized. We'd like to make sure that appropriate locations are identified for projects on federal lands, and presumably limited to those corridors—and presumably limited to those corridors. And we'd like to make sure that consideration is given to improving access for renewable energy such as wind and solar.

And that concludes my comments. Thank you very much.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you, Mr. Kunkle. Our next speaker will be James Lockhart. He will be followed by Julie Seivka.

James Lockhart: Thank you. My name is Jim Lockhart. I'm the conservation chair for the Pike's Peak Sierra Club Group, which is located in Colorado Springs. And my comments sort of follow Mr. Kunkle's.

We are particularly concerned that the corridors which are designated take into account not only existing land management practices and decisions, but also proposed legislation. As Mr. Kunkle mentioned, there are five areas where there are—within the DeGette Bill which are potentially affected by these—this proposal today. And we would like to see adjustments made to the corridor in light of the DeGette Bill to avoid the wilderness areas.

My particular concern, and the area which I know best, is the Badger Creek area. It's along the Arkansas River and is at the south end of the Badger Creek area. Abuts onto an existing power line, which is part of the proposed corridor. We're concerned because of the width of the corridor that, like Mr. Kunkle, it could bleed into the wilderness area. You know, if it does that, then the designation could be more difficult. It would be a conflict which could be avoided through this process if the corridor is designated with the DeGette Bill in mind [inaudible]. Therefore, I hope that you will consider that and will look at the DeGette Bill and take it into account.

I do have maps which, if any of the audience would like to see, I could show them. I will submit them with our written comments at the time that our—we submit our written comments.

That concludes my oral comments for today.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you, Mr. Lockhart. Our next speaker will be—well, I probably said this totally wrong. Juli, J-U-L-I—Seivka, S-E-I-V-K-A.

Juli Seivka: I'm Juli Seivka. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed energy corridors.

I have a few concerns with the West-wide energy corridor planning process and the Programmatic EIS. Some of the proposed corridors cut through amazing places in Colorado, including proposed wilderness that is included in Congresswoman DeGette's Colorado Wilderness Act. The same corridor that is affecting the proposed wilderness areas in the northwest part of the state, then meets up with other parts of a corridor that would basically circle the western portion of Dinosaur National Monument, ruining the visitors' experience and the native vegetation.

A native Coloradan, I have watched many of our extraordinary wild lands disappear over the years. These amazing places are a major reason that I love living here and I know a lot of people feel the same way.

I'm also concerned because the PEIS fails to properly address some large scheme principles. The proposed corridors appear to accommodate mostly coal-fired power plants rather than renewable energies such as wind and solar. This is a major concern in Colorado where we have a renewable energy standard and a growing wind and solar economy. These plans should be relevant for decades into the future, and focusing on coal rather than renewables is shortsighted.

The PEIS also fails to adequately provide for public participation because it lacks a range of alternatives. Besides being required by the National Environmental Policy Act, a range of alternatives is essential for the public to provide substantive comments. Without alternatives, we can only comment on what we don't like rather than advocating for proposed options.

Finally, the failure to show how and where the corridors will likely connect between federal lands makes it impossible to measure the true scope of potential impacts. This incomplete analysis prevents the public from assessing impacts to state, private, and federal lands. The Environmental Impact Statement should provide analysis of the cumulative impacts to all lands affected by the proposed plan.

Thank you.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you, Ms. Seivka. And I'm sorry for mispronouncing your name.

Our next speaker will be Craig Cox.

Craig Cox: Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity. My name is Craig Cox. I represent the Interwest Energy Alliance. Interwest is a trade association that represents the nation's leading companies in the wind and utility scale solar energy industries, bringing these industries together with the West's advocacy community to develop consensus-based approaches to project and transmission development around the West. We seek to harness the West's abundant and inexhaustible supply of renewable energy technologies.

And how abundant are these technologies? Well, in 2004 through 2006, the Western Governors Association convened a task force to look at all these technologies. This task force came up with very quantifiable numbers, including up to 13,000 megawatts of geothermal potential, at least 8,000 megawatts of solar in the West, up to 54,000 megawatts of wind, 48,000 megawatts of energy efficiency, 10,000 megawatts of biomass energy, and it's really extensive. These numbers are achievable and these numbers are feasible.

But for the most part, these resources require transmission. And in this regard, I really appreciate the coordinated and comprehensive approach that the federal government is bringing—is trying to bring to this process. This corridor process represents an excellent opportunity to move the entire region to a new energy economy based on clean and renewable energy resources in which we are so richly blessed.

It does seem, though, that the proposed corridors appear to facilitate proposed coal and fossil energy development more so than for renewable energy resources in the West. I think we need to look toward the future as we plan to make these corridors permanent across the region.

And so, in this regard, I'd like to suggest improving the corridor study by having the federal agencies involved in this study develop an alternative that looks at linking up renewable energy resources such as geothermal in Nevada and Utah, wind in Colorado, Wyoming, and New Mexico, solar throughout the region, and identifying these zones. I don't know about submitting things for the record, but I would say that in Colorado a task force recently did a task force. It's called the SB-91 Task Force that identified all of the state's renewable energy resource areas in great detail, and giving quantifiable megawatt potentials in each of these resource zones. It's a real good effort. I can include the link to this report in my written comments.

And I would say that the Western Governors Association is also planning on doing a similar type of study West-wide. And I think we need to take a look at where the renewable energy resources are, work with the Western Governors Association, state agencies, stakeholder groups at all levels, and collaborate in fashioning a West-wide Corridor plan that capitalizes on our wealth of renewable resources in a responsible and environmentally sensitive manner.

So, I think that harnessing the West's abundant renewable energy resource space will bring tremendous economic, environmental and other benefits to the entire country. It'll help insulate our country from price volatility and ensure a stronger national security posture overall. So, I would say the renewable energy industry is ready to strengthen our energy infrastructure and to work together with the parties, with the federal government and all the parties that I've mentioned in developing a properly designed corridor plan and seeing it through and making it happen.

Thank you.

LaVerne Kyriess:

Thank you, Mr. Cox. Our next speaker will be Tom Darin.

Tom Darin:

Thank you. I thought I would sign up and I was fourth. So, I will just proceed with my comments.

My name is Tom Darin and I work and focus on energy transmission with Western Resource Advocates based in Boulder. We're a conservation group with a seven-state focus in the interior West and the Rock Mountain region. And we advocate a very strong, sustainable energy policy in the region, focused on principles of energy efficiency and renewable energy and clean sources connecting to the power grid. We also have a strong

land and wildlife and water conservation and defense programs. So, I think our organization is—well, I know our organization is very interested in this process because it combines all of those things.

And I'd like to preface my comments by thanking the agencies for the extensive public involvement, all these hearings, that I'm sure many folks are glad are kind of winding down in the next few days. And on top of that, responding to the public's concerns. The draft map that came out in 2006 had a much more significant impact, I think, on sensitive public lands in the West. And the current Draft EIS, while it does have some issues, is a great improvement. I think that we've been hearing that around the region.

I kind of want to echo some things that Mr. Cox said from Interwest Energy Alliance. I caught the tail end of his comments. And this document is really coming out in an exciting time in the region. Colorado, borrowing Governor Ritter's phrase, and the region, are really moving into a new energy economy fitting for the 21st century. And it's an exciting time for these corridors because the corridors really present an opportunity to really facilitate that new energy economy.

And by that I mean—stepping back a moment—that you have the key cabinet level Secretaries of Energy, Interior, Agriculture and Defense, to name the big four, looking programmatically at this region of the country, at 11 western states. And these corridors are linking population and load centers with the future designation of power lines and generation sources. So the corridors, if planned properly, really have this incredible opportunity for the entire West to help facilitate that—quite frankly—exciting transition to a new energy economy. And for Western Resource Advocates, we think there are three principles that need to guide this process to get us, you know, in that direction. And we umbrella those under the concept of "Smart Corridors."

Smart Corridors, first and foremost, recognize that the smartest power line or corridor is the one we really don't even need. We encourage an analysis in the final Environmental Impact Statement of aggressively applying concepts of energy efficiency and the amount of power that can be supplied by local distributed sources within our major western population centers. There's an exciting study that came out from the Western Governors Association just a couple years ago that found that we can reduce the need for added generation and associated transmission lines by about 25 percent if we achieve 20 percent efficiency in our major population centers by 2020.

And on top of that, we need to efficiently maximize the use of the current grid; not just current rights-of-way that the study takes a good look at, of trying to overlap corridors with, but taking—using technological solutions to really beef-up our electrical grid. Voltage class upgrades and different things where there are already power lines, move those up to higher capacities to move more energy without having any additional impacts on the environment. That's smart.

Concept number two. And Craig talked about this quite a bit. Colorado—20 percent renewable energy by 2020. Eight of the 11 Western states have renewable portfolio standards. Let's focus on clean and renewable energy resources with these corridors. We've produced some maps. I have them. We've overlaid the corridors against proposed coal plants in the region, proposed centralized solar power, postvocalic power, industrial scale sites, geothermal potential and proposed plants, and wind—major wind farms in the region. And it seems that those corridors mostly line up to facilitate industry-proposed coal plants. They do, in all fairness, pick up quite a bit of the renewables. But we, much like Mr. Cox, would advocate for an alternative that would be driven by having these corridors focused on renewable, clean energy sources.

And third and finally, we can't have any corridor, even after applying efficiency and after focusing on these clean, renewable energy resources, unduly affect our Western lands and wildlife heritage. And—so I think I have 30 seconds? Well, I'll wrap up.

I think there are some key Western landscapes still in play that we need to work around. The Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and Arches National Park in Utah, Sevieta National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico come close with some of these corridors through some impacts.

And you know, I'll conclude. I know that we're at the end of the public hearing phase of this comment period. And I know from some of my colleague groups that there's been a lot of concern expressed in Albuquerque, expressed in Nevada and some other public hearings, about the impacts to these lands. I'm convinced that if we, you know, together focus on efficiency, focus on tying up clean, renewable energy resources to the grid, and then avoiding these types of public lands, if we focus on those three concepts, you're going to find widespread public support for this effort, more than you already are seeing, and you'll certainly have the backing of Western Resource Advocates.

So, thank you.

LaVerne Kyriss:

Thank you, Mr. Darin. You're the last of our speakers to have signed up to speak. But, I want to give other folks in the room today a chance to make comments if they would like to do so. So, are there any folks who would like to make comments for the record?

I know you cut your comments short, Tom. Did you want to add anything for the record? I know you're going to send us written comments.

So, if there are no other speakers at this time, what we're going to do is temporarily close the hearing. And then, if people want to make comments on the record, we'll go back on the record at any time someone wants to make comments on the record.

So, I'd like to thank you for joining us today to provide oral comments on the Draft PEIS proposing to designate energy corridors on federal lands in the West. Comments on the Draft PEIS are due February 14th and may be submitted online via the project website, by mail, or by fax. All comments we receive by February 14th will be considered in preparing the Final PEIS. Comments submitted after February 14th will be considered to the degree possible.

Again, thank you for your attention and we will now stay around to informally discuss the Draft PEIS with you.

[Recess.]

LaVerne Kyriss:

Ladies and gentlemen, we have someone who'd like to make comments on the record. So, if I could ask you to come back and join us, we'll go back on the record. I'm going to ask Ihor to fix our computer so we can hear comments [inaudible].

And so, our next speaker will be Chris Arend? Arend. Chris, come on up and—.

Chris Arend:

Thanks. I'm sorry I came a little late. It seems like you guys are on a break, but I appreciate you making the time available.

My name is Chris Arend. I am the deputy district director for Congresswoman Diana DeGette, who represents the First Congressional District here in Colorado. And she has written a letter regarding the West-Wide Energy Corridor Draft PEIS and she's asked me

to read it here. She's unfortunately not in town this week. But, I'd just like to read this and then have it be on the record and—okay.

To Whom It May Concern: I am writing to write comments on the West-wide Energy Corridor Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. I commend the Department of Energy and other participating federal agencies for providing opportunities for the public to comment on this important issue.

I understand that a number of suggestions from the public have been incorporated into this Draft PEIS, and that additional information sources have been made available to increase the public's understanding of energy corridors, particularly here in the Rocky Mountain West.

As vice chair of the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce, I am fully aware of the growing crisis regarding the reliability of our nation's electrical transmission infrastructure, and providing energy corridors will help meet our future energy demands.

While I do not support the Energy and Policy Act of 2005, I do support a balanced approach to developing, creating and transmitting energy across our nation and appreciate the difficult challenges this process has undertaken in analyzing potential energy corridor locations. In particular, I appreciate the federal government's initial efforts to avoid special and sensitive lands across the West in the energy corridor analysis.

However, I would like to bring to your attention several potential wilderness quality lands I have included in the Colorado Wilderness Act of 2007, which will either be directly impacted or in close proximity to proposed energy corridors in the Draft PEIS.

Since 1999 I have introduced the Colorado Wilderness Act, the proposal to protect 62 separate areas consisting of 1.65 million acres of wilderness quality public land across Colorado. The land identified in the Act consists of existing Bureau of Land Management Wilderness Study Areas, and additional public lands identified by citizens which meet the requirements of the Wilderness Act of 1964.

It's my understanding that proposed corridors in the Draft PEIS will directly bisect several areas included in the pending proposal, including in my pending legislation, the Colorado Wilderness Act of 2007, including the Yampa River proposed wilderness, Roan Plateau proposed wilderness, South Shale Ridge proposed wilderness, Norwood Canyon proposed wilderness, and Badger Creek proposed wilderness.

Additionally, the federal line of several proposed corridors are within a mile radius of the Skull Creek Wilderness Study Area, the Willow Creek WSA, the Cold Creek—Cold Spring West WSA, and Diamond Lake WSA.

I ask you to avoid energy corridors within these proposed areas and WSA—proposed areas—excuse me—and WSAs, and at minimum include in your analysis alternative routes which will not adversely impact these pristine areas. The limited acreage included in the Colorado Wilderness Act of 2007, compared to the million of acres of public lands already available for energy development, transmission siting, and multiple use is indicative of the diminishing presence of wilderness as a critical resource on our public lands. Our nation and future generations will be much poorer if we don't do what is necessary to avoid further winnowing of our special places and wilderness areas.

So, I thank you for consideration of my comments and I thank you for making time for me.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you, Mr. Arend. Is there anyone else who would like to make a comment on the record at this time? If not, we'll again go back to informal discussion. And if someone wants to make a comment on the record, we'll come back on the record. Thank you.

[Recess.]

LaVerne Kyriss: Good afternoon. I'd like to call you again into session. We have another person who would like to comment on the record. So again, I want to thank you for your attendance and I'd like to call Pauline Reetz to the microphone here. And Pauline, if you can tell us your name and who you're representing and give us your comment. Thank you.

Pauline Reetz: Thank you very much. My name is Pauline Reetz, R-E-E-T-Z. And I'm a resident of Denver. I'm here representing the Audubon Society of Greater Denver, of which I'm a board member and the conservation chairman. I really appreciate you all having this meeting here because the last one I heard about was in Cheyenne and it's a two-hour drive to Cheyenne. So, appreciate being able to do this here in Denver.

I just have a couple of comments. I'll try to be quite short. I think our major concern is—one of them—is to, with these corridors, avoid special and sensitive areas on the public lands such as BLM and Forest Service identified wilderness study areas, inventoried roadless area, business and wilderness proposed national wilderness refuges, although that does not seem to be a problem, in Colorado anyway. But, those are categories of areas that should be avoided. Also, state and national parks. Any kind of wildlife—special wilderness management areas. In Colorado we have state wilderness areas that are acquired for their wilderness value. So, those kinds of areas we'd like to see avoided.

Secondly, as much as possible we should be avoiding the building of new roads, power lines and corridors and using existing corridors wherever possible which, again, it looks like is being done wherever possible.

The major points I want to make about that is that these—since the roadless areas, even the identified inventoried roadless areas, the wilderness study areas, etc., are usually roadless for a reason. They're usually remote, they're usually very rugged, and they don't have a road because nobody could build one or wanted to build one in there.

Also, these are places where we still have natural ecosystem processes working, more or less. They are not as affected by human interference, although that's hard to say now with global warming because human interference is something that could be a pretty large-scale item. But, relatively speaking, these are areas that are still working as they would have worked 200 years ago and should be left that way.

And a third comment. Some considerations that we should be looking at are weed control particularly, because we do have a lot of noxious weeds that tend to move into areas when you do new construction. The use of best management practices. And particularly connections when possible to renewable energy sources is something we'd like to see, especially in the eastern plains in Colorado I think we're gonna get more wind farms. We may get more solar farms, if you want to call them that. And these should be hooked up whenever possible to these major corridors.

Okay. I think that concludes our observations on this process. We look forward to seeing the alternatives that are being developed and probably comment at that point further. Thank you very much.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you, Ms. Reetz. Is there anyone who wants to make a comment for the record in the room right now? If there's no one who wants to make another comment for the

record, we'll again go off the record and go back to information discussion. And again, if someone wants to make a comment we'll go back on the record. Thank you.

Denver, Colorado, January 31, 2008, 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

LaVerne Kyriss: Well, good evening. I have that it's 6:00. Are we online? Great. So, if I could get everyone's attention.

I'd like to thank you for joining us for a public hearing on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement on Designating Energy Corridors on Federal Lands in the West. I'm LaVerne Kyriss from the Department of Energy and I'll serve as this evening's hearing officer.

But before we begin the formal hearing, Duane Spencer, who is the acting deputy state director for Energy Lands and Minerals for the Bureau of Land Management, will make a brief opening statement.

But first, if you haven't signed in yet, or if you have not let us know that you want to speak at this meeting, you could do so right now at the registration table just outside.

Handout materials are out there available. We have a project fact sheet that has a map on the back. And another handout that gives you an example of our siting process.

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In the event of a fire or other alarm, we'd ask you to please take your personal belongings with you and evacuate the building as quickly, quietly and safely as possible. And you do that through the lobby.

With us today representing the federal interagency team managing this work are Glen Parker from Forest Service, right back here, and Ron Montagna from BLM.

After we're finished taking your comments, we'll stay around to informally discuss the Draft PEIS with you.

And now I'm going to turn the mic over to Duane.

Duane Spencer: Thank you. Like she said, I'm Duane Spencer and thank you all for coming out. I've been asked to stick to our formal statement. For those of you that have already heard it before, you'll hear it again here.

So, good evening. Thank you for coming to give your comments on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the Designation of Energy Transport Corridors on Federal Lands in the West. In a few moments you'll hear a brief presentation about the document, which the Departments of Interior, Energy and Agriculture are preparing to meet requirements in the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

Currently, applications for rights-of-ways to cross federal lands with pipelines or electrical transmission infrastructure are considered on a case by case basis, without much coordination among the various federal agencies whose lands are often involved in projects that transport energy across long distances.

In 2005, Congress directed federal agencies to address this situation by designating energy transport corridors, and also performing necessary reviews of the environmental

impacts of designation. A Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement developed under the National Environmental Policy Act represents that environmental review.

It is important to note that another round of site-specific NEPA analysis will be completed for each project proposed for a location in a designated corridor. The Departments of Energy, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service developed the corridor locations proposed in the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement using a three-step process, which is detailed in the document, in a handout available on the information table, and which the presentation will also describe.

In essence, today's hearing represents Step Four in that process. Public comments will help the agencies further refine the location of corridors so that the important goals of the project are met, balancing the need to improve energy delivery in the West with our responsibility to protect the many resources found on federal lands.

From the beginning, the agencies have been committed to this strategy, and your comments will be valuable in helping to insure that it is carried through to the end of this planning effort.

Representatives from the Department of Energy, BLM, and Forest Service are here to receive your comments. And on behalf of the three agencies, thank you for your interest and participation.

LaVerne Kyriss:

Thank you, Duane.

We're here this evening to receive your oral comments on the Draft PEIS. You can also submit comments via the project website, by fax, or by mail.

This hearing is being webcast and transcribed, so speakers are asked to speak clearly and distinctly into the microphone. If you are having trouble hearing a speaker in the room, please signal me and I'll notify the speaker accordingly.

After everyone who wishes to comment has spoken, I'll close the hearing. So far, we have no one signed up to speak on this issue tonight. If we get someone, we'll give them five minutes and we'll take whatever time we need. I will notify you—I'll try to notify you when you have 30 seconds remaining so you can wrap up.

The hearing is to take comments on a Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement prepared in response to direction given by Congress to five federal agencies: Energy, Agriculture, Interior, Commerce, and Defense. Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act directs the secretaries to designate corridors for oil, gas, and hydrogen pipe lines, and electric transmission lines on federal lands in the 11 western states to perform the necessary environmental reviews. Partly because of this requirement, we decided to prepare the Draft PEIS that's the subject of this hearing and to incorporate these designations into land-use, land management, or equivalent plans. A separate and distinct public process is expected to begin later this year to identify corridors in the other 39 states.

The statute requires that when the secretaries designate these corridors, they must specify the corridor centerline, the corridor width, and the corridor compatible uses. Congress also directed the secretaries to take into account the need for electric transmission facilities to improve reliability, relieve congestion, and enhance the capacity of the national grid to deliver electricity.

The Draft PEIS proposes designating more than 6,000 miles of corridors: 62 percent would incorporate locally-designated corridors and/or rights-of-way; 86 percent would be

on BLM land; and 11 percent on Forest Service land. The Draft PEIS identifies 166 proposed corridor segments in all 11 western states. If all are included in the follow-on decisions, this would involve amending 165 land-use or equivalent plans.

Previously designated corridors are outlined in yellow on the project maps. Some of these are proposed for upgrade only. In the case of existing previously designated utility corridors, amendments to land-use plans designating these as 368 corridors would subject these corridors to the interagency coordination processes described in the PEIS, and they would be assigned Section 368 criteria; in effect, the centerline, width, and compatible purposes.

Using existing corridors alone would not meet the requirements of Section 368. So, we've identified an additional 2,300 miles of proposed corridors. The proposed corridors also vary in width. We used a 3,500 foot starting point to provide flexibility for siting multiple rights-of-way.

An energy corridor is defined as a parcel of land identified through a land-use planning process as a preferred location for existing and future utility rights-of-way, and that is suitable to accommodate one or more rights-of-way which are similar, identical, or compatible. Corridor designations assist in minimizing adverse impacts and the proliferation of separate rights-of-way.

A right-of-way is a specific land-use authorization—not a change in ownership—granted to allow construction and operation of a specific project that's often linear in character, such as a utility line or a roadway.

Right-of-way permits include requirements for compatible land-uses and are not granted until a project applicant has complied with all relevant requirements, including appropriate environmental review.

In November 2007 we published the Draft PEIS. Comments are due February 14th. We will analyze and respond to the comments and complete the tasks necessary to prepare a Final PEIS. We expect to have this ready sometime in mid-2008.

The land management agencies will be able to sign records of decision to designate corridors through amendments to land-use plans no sooner than 30 days after the Final PEIS is issued.

The Draft PEIS analyzed two alternatives: taking No Action and the Proposed Action. Choosing to adopt the No Action alternative would result in continuing ad hoc, uncoordinated development as is done now. The proposed action is the result of a three-step corridor siting process described in detail in Chapter Two of the Draft PEIS.

The first step was to incorporate comments provided by the public during scoping and after a draft map was released in 2006. Then the agencies worked closely with local federal land managers to accommodate local land-use priorities, incorporate local knowledge of areas, and avoid areas known to be incompatible with potential future development. A handout summarizing this process for determining where the proposed corridors would be located is on the information table. Examples of specific corridors are also available on the project website.

We believe that the analysis of these alternatives meets NEPA's requirement for a hard look. Because the proposed action does not involve any site-specific, ground-disturbing activities, site-specific NEPA review will be required to support all proposed projects within a designated 368 corridor.

And today, we don't know when and where any projects will be proposed by applicants seeking to site pipelines and/or transmission lines. As a result of this uncertainty, the environmental effects described in Chapter Three of the Draft PEIS are necessarily more general than a site-specific analysis for a known project would be.

Comments will be most useful if they are specific, if they include suggested changes or methodologies, provide a rationale for your suggestions, and refer to the specific section or page number of the Draft PEIS.

Finally, we encourage you to submit comments via the project website. It's easy for you, it speeds our ability to get comments into the database for analysis, and up on the website for public review. And it doesn't require stamps or envelopes.

Now, for our hearing process. I'll call speakers in the order in which you registered. We'd ask you to please step up to this microphone and clearly state your name and organization, if you're representing one, before you make your comments. Please limit your oral comments to five minutes so that everyone who wants to speak today may have a chance to be heard. I will advise you when you have 30 seconds left so you can wrap up.

We'll repeat this process until everyone who's registered to speak has had a chance to provide comments. I'll then ask if anyone else wants to speak. After those people have had a chance to speak and we've done back and seen if anyone else wanted to make comments, we'll close the hearing and remind you of when comments are due and how to submit them.

If you're speaking from a prepared statement, please also leave us a copy at the registration desk. If you're not prepared to do that tonight, please submit it via the project website.

Agency representatives won't be answering questions during the hearing, except to clarify necessary points, but we will stay afterwards to discuss the Draft PEIS with you.

Are there any questions on how we're gonna take comments this evening? If there are no questions on the process we'll use today, we'll now begin taking your comments.

And right now, I have no speakers registered to take comments. So, I will go over the closing comments. But, if somebody wants to go back on the record to take comments, we'll do that. And we did that about three times this afternoon. So, that's an easy thing to do.

So, we will temporarily close this hearing. And I'd like to thank you for joining us today to provide oral comment— oh, I'm sorry. I missed you. I apologize!

Luke Schafer: [Inaudible.]

LaVerne Kyriss: No, I just didn't see you. I'm so sorry. Well, come up here, tell us who you are. I'm so sorry.

Luke Schafer: No, I wasn't [inaudible]. My name's Luke Schafer. I'm a resident of Moffat County; Craig, Colorado. And full disclosure, I also work for the Colorado Environmental Coalition. However, I'm here representing myself tonight.

In general, what I wanted to focus on with my comments tonight regards Moffat County and Rio Blanco County. As most people are aware, these two areas, both the Little Snake Resource Area and the White River Resource Area are currently undergoing planning

revision. Little Snake is doing a full resource management plan revision and the White River Resource Area is currently doing a resource management plan amendment for oil and gas development.

And while that's separate from this process, it also has something to do with it. White River's looking at 22,000 wells of—for natural gas development. The Little Snake Resource Area is looking at a myriad of different values, between greater Sage Grouse protections—increased protections from what is the current stipulations—and also a great deal of an increase for oil and gas exploration.

And from my experience in this area, what we've seen over the last few years is, every time a pipeline goes in, development increases. And while this is not permitting pipeline, per se, it also is laying the groundwork for additional capacity to increase in the future. And that's a concern because, as I said, all these plans right now are trying to decide the future for these resources. And not having it incorporated, especially in the case of Little Snake Resource Area, is a concern because of what the increased development will impact in the future.

I also wanted to address in particular what is known as the Yampa—I think Yampa Canyon Citizens Wilderness Proposal, which is located on the Yampa River, just approximately a few minutes from Hamilton, Colorado. And this is both a Citizens Wilderness Area that was deemed eligible for Wild and Scenic River consideration.

From what I'm able to ascertain from the maps that I've seen, this proposed corridor goes through one of the Wild and Scenic River eligible segments. That's a major concern because this is one of the very few rivers in Colorado that is eligible, and we expect to see both suitable in the future as well when the final plan is released sometime here this year, next year or whenever that might occur.

Having this sort of—any future development in that area will adversely impact the outstanding and remarkable values of those segments. And that's something I really don't want to see in the future.

I think one of the solutions to this problem is to make sure that that utility corridor follows existing highways. Highway 13 is relatively in close proximity to that area and is something that can be addressed in this planning process.

The other one would be in the western part of Moffat County. There's a couple Wilderness Study Areas called Willow Creek, Skull Creek, and also the Bald Canyon. They're two separate complexes. But, it looks as if the proposed corridor will go within one mile of these areas, possibly affecting the viewshed, which needs to be addressed in a proper context within this plan that I haven't seen thus far.

This area is one of the few areas recommended to Congress for future designation. And it really is a jewel of the area and I'd like to see it protected. Both the values on the ground and the viewshed.

But overall, I wanted to go back to the transmission corridors. We have seen great wildlife habitat fragmentation from the interstate pipeline corridor that runs from Parachute, Colorado up to I-80 in Wyoming. And like I said, the capacity—the increased capacity that these corridors are likely to bring, in my opinion, is a major concern for residents of this area.

The additional thing is that there needs to be [unintelligible] analysis in the future. But, there needs to be an understanding of cumulative effects that come along with decisions like this. And that seems to be lacking within this document.

That is about the extent.

LaVerne Kyriss: Are there other folks who want to make comments? If there are no other speakers at the moment, we will temporarily close the hearing. I'd like to thank you for joining us this evening to provide oral comments on the Draft PEIS, preparing to designate energy corridors on federal lands in the West.

Comments on the Draft PEIS are due February 14th and may be submitted online via the project website, by mail, or by fax. All comments received by February 14th will be considered in preparing the Final PEIS. Comments submitted after February 14th will be considered to the degree possible.

Again, thank you for your attention and we'll stay around to informally discuss the Draft PEIS with you.

[Recess.]

LaVerne Kyriss: Ladies and gentlemen, if I can have your attention. We're going to go back on the record. And we have a speaker who'd like to make some comments. So, I'm going to call Steve Smith up to the microphone.

Steve Smith: Thank you very much. I didn't realize it would be such a production to—all for me, but—.

My name is Steve Smith. I live in xxxxx Colorado. And I work with a network of organizations that advocate protection of key portions of our public lands. So, a process this big captures our attention, and we appreciate very much the extent you've gone to to create an opportunity for citizens to write and to speak about this issue.

There are lots of complex details, obviously, to the basis proposal. And lots of details geographically in terms of the locations you're considering for corridors. But really, I just have two basic comments that in a way umbrella's those.

One is that, just to express a little anxiety and also encourage correspondingly great care on your part about selecting both the locations of these corridors and the policy implications of those selections.

My anxiety comes from the concept that it seems to be suggested in the proposal that federal land-use management plans for federal and public lands would need to be amended in order to accommodate these corridors. And that such a sweeping override of carefully prepared, integrated, multiple-use management plans is something that I think needs to be done very cautiously. So, please take into careful consideration the existing management prescriptions and priorities, and the natural landscape characteristics that those represent or are intended to protect as you look at this kind of overlay designation.

And the second point I'd like to make is to ask you to specifically adjust these corridors, either in their linear location or in their width, in order to not impose them on certain uniquely natural or uniquely sensitive public lands, which include National Park Service units, Nation Forest Roadless Areas, National Forest Wilderness recommendations, Bureau of Land Management Wilderness Study Areas, and Citizen-Proposed Wilderness Areas, all of which either have been considered carefully by the agencies or by Congress, or have the potential in the future to be considered for special protection by Congress. And don't want to preempt those opportunities for either continued protection or future protection. So, if you can steer clear of those areas, we'll feel a lot better.

Thanks very much for this opportunity and hope that you have success in getting lots of good comments and making wise decisions. Thank you.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you, Mr. Smith. Is there anyone who wants to make a formal comment on the record at this time? If there's not, we'll again adjourn and go back to an informal discussion.

[Recess.]

LaVerne Kyriss: Yeah, find a seat that works for you.

So, this is a hearing to take oral comments on a Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement—. All right. I'll talk here. I'm sorry. Well, if you came and sat up close, I wouldn't have to talk through the mic!

This is a hearing to take public oral comments on a Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement on Designating Energy Corridors on Federal Lands in the 11 Western States. And we're here to take comments. I won't go over the details of how we're taking comments. Basically, everybody who wants to talk gets a chance to talk.

But, let's talk a little bit about the proposal and what we're doing. Energy Policy Act of 2005, and specifically Section 368, directs the Secretaries of Energy, Agriculture, Interior, Commerce, and Defense to designate corridors for oil, gas, and hydrogen pipelines, and electricity transmission lines on federal lands in the 11 western states.

It also directs them to perform the necessary environmental reviews. And because of the environmental review requirement, we decided to prepare a Draft Programmatic EIS that's the subject of this hearing. And also, to incorporate these designated corridors into the land-use or land management plans. There will be a separate public process that will begin later this year that will identify similar corridors on federal lands in the other 39 states.

One of the things that the law requires is that the secretaries must specify the corridor centerline, the corridor width and the corridor compatible use. And this is spelled out in the statutes. And the secretaries also have to take into account the need for electric transmission facilities to improve reliability, relieve congestion, and enhance the capability of the national grid to deliver electricity. And those are all elements that are specified in the statute.

So, we're proposing to designate 6,055 miles of proposed corridors: Sixty-two percent of these corridors would incorporate existing corridors or existing rights-of-way on federal—that's locally designated corridors or locally designated rights-of-way; 86 percent would be on BLM land, 11 percent would be on Forest Service land. The other small percentage would be on other federal agencies.

If all of these proposed corridors are acted on in the follow-on decision, we would have 165 land-use plans that we—that would be amended in all the 11 western states.

Previously designated corridors—if you look on the small map that I gave you that's on the back of that fact sheet, you'll see those in yellow along—you'll see the black corridors and there's a yellow sort of highlight around them. Those are locally designated corridors. Some of these are proposed for rights-of-way—or for upgrades only.

And then, for these previously designated corridors, if they're adopted as 368 corridors, they would have the interagency coordination process that we've described in the PEIS,

and they would also get the Section 368 criteria, which are the centerline, the corridor width and the compatible uses. So, we would adopt those 368 criteria.

Now, if we were just to use those existing previously designated corridors and rights-of-way, we wouldn't be able to meet the purposes of the law, which told us to relieve congestion and improve reliability, etc. So, we proposed an additional 2,300 miles of new corridors. The proposed width of the corridors also varies. We started out with a 3,500 foot width as our starting point so that we could have flexibility in siting multiple rights-of-way.

A little bit about corridors and rights-of-way. Corridors are a parcel of land identified through a land-use planning process. These are the preferred locations for existing and future utility rights-of-way. And the requirements are that they be suitable to accommodate one or more rights-of-way, which are similar, identical or compatible. And these assist organizations in minimizing adverse impacts and the proliferation of separate rights-of-way.

A right-of-way is a land-use authorization, not a change in ownership, so that you can construct and operate a specific project. And often these are linear, such as a roadway or a utility line.

Right-of-way permits include the requirements for compatible land-uses and aren't granted until a project applicant has complied with all relevant requirements, including the appropriate environmental review.

So, where are we in this process? In November 2007, we published the Draft PEIS. Comments on it are due February 14th. After that, we will analyze the comments, prepare responses, and do the other tasks necessary to finish—or to prepare a Final EIS. We expect to have this ready sometime in mid-2008. After that, the land management agencies would be able to sign records of decisions to designated corridors through amending their land-use plans no sooner than 30 days after that Final EIS is published.

In this EIS, we looked at two alternatives. We looked at the No Action alternative, and we looked at the Proposed Action. If we chose to adopt the No Action alternative, we'd continue to have ad hoc, uncoordinated development as is done right now. However, when we looked at the proposed action—that's actually the result of this three-step siting process that's outlined on that 11 x 17—or there's an example of how we got there on that 11 x 17 handout.

So, the first step was to incorporate the comments we got from the public during scoping and after the draft map was released. After that, the agencies worked with the local federal land managers to accommodate local land-use priorities, to incorporate local knowledge of the areas, and to avoid areas that are known to be incompatible with potential future developments.

We really believe that this analysis meets NEPA's requirement for a hard look. And because this proposed action doesn't involve any site-specific ground disturbing activities, we will require site-specific NEPA review for all proposed projects that would be proposed in a figure 368 corridor.

And today, we don't know where any of those projects—what they would be or where they would be. So, we have a lot of uncertainty. And so, Chapter Three in the Draft PEIS has very general environmental impacts. It doesn't have the specific impacts that you would see in a site-specific project because we don't know what they would be. We talk about them in general, but not specifics.

A little bit about comments. They're due February 14th. They're most useful if they're specific, if they include suggested changes or methodologies, if they provide the rationale for your suggestions, and if they give us either the section or the page number of the PEIS. That helps us know what you're commenting on. It's most efficient to comment on the website. We can get things into the database for analysis. We can get them up on the website for public review. And you don't have to spend—buy stamps.

And if you want to make comments, we can go over the hearing process. Basically, you just come up and make your comments.

So, how about if we just talk?

West Wide Energy Corridors
Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement
Comments
Denver, Colorado

From: Lynn Prebble
905 Knickerbocker Circle
Silver Cliff, Colorado 81252



Please make sure the proposed designations for (PEIS) involve:

1. New pipelines or powerlines are actually needed
2. That federal lands are necessary locations, and special or sensitive public lands are avoided.
3. That projects are subjected to best management practices to limit damage to other resources, recreation and views
4. That risks to federal and other affected lands are realistically and completely assessed, so that those risks can be avoided.
5. Once appropriate locations are identified, projects on federal lands are limited to those corridors.
6. Please give consideration to improving access for renewable energy (ie wind and solar)
7. AVOID AREAS IN PENDING WILDERNESS BILL LEGISLATION
8. Please develop alternatives, so we (as the public) have a choice.
9. Do not approve the proposed corridor through five citizen proposed wilderness areas included in Congresswoman DeGette's Colorado Wilderness Act, which is now before Congress. Special wild lands would also be threatened in Curecanti National Recreation Area, Forest Service Roadless Areas and other protected lands.



West Wide Energy Corridors
Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement
Comments
Denver, Colorado

From: Mark Prebble
905 Knickerbocker Circle
Silver Cliff, Colorado 81252

Please make sure the proposed designations for (PEIS) involve:

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Mark Prebble

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ENERGY AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
INVESTIGATION

SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, TRADE
AND CONSUMER PROTECTION
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4329

January 31, 2008

West-wide Energy Corridor DEIS
Argonne National Laboratory
9700 S. Cass Avenue
Building 900, Mail Stop 4
Argonne, IL 60439

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to provide comments on the West-wide Energy Corridor Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (Draft PEIS). I commend the Department of Energy and the other participating federal agencies for providing opportunities for the public to comment on this important issue. I understand that a number of suggestions from the public have been incorporated into this Draft PEIS and that additional information sources have been made available to increase the public's understanding of energy corridors, particularly here in the Rocky Mountain West.

As Vice Chair of the US House Committee on Energy and Commerce, I am fully aware of the growing crisis regarding the reliability of our nation's electrical transmission infrastructure and providing energy corridors which will help meet our future energy demands. While I did not support the Energy and Policy Act of 2005, I do support a balanced approach to developing, creating, and transmitting energy across our nation and appreciate the difficult challenges this process has undertaken in analyzing potential energy corridor locations. In particular, I appreciate the Federal Government's initial efforts to avoid special and sensitive lands across the west in their energy corridor analysis.

However, I would like to bring to your attention several potential wilderness quality lands I have included in the Colorado Wilderness Act of 2007 which will either be directly impacted or in close proximity to proposed energy corridors in the Draft PEIS.

Since 1999, I have introduced the Colorado Wilderness Act, a proposal to protect 62 separate areas consisting of 1.65 million acres of wilderness quality public land across Colorado. The lands identified in the Act consist of existing Bureau of Land Management Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) and additional public lands identified by citizens which meet the requirements of The Wilderness Act of 1964.

It is my understanding that proposed corridors in the Draft PEIS will directly bisect several areas included in pending legislation, the "Colorado Wilderness Act of 2007" including: Yampa River Proposed Wilderness, Roan Plateau Proposed Wilderness, South Shale Ridge Proposed Wilderness, Norwood Canyon Proposed Wilderness, and Badger Creek Proposed Wilderness. Additionally the centerline of several proposed corridors are within a mile radius of Skull Creek WSA, Willow Creek WSA, Cold Spring West WSA, and Diamond Breaks WSA.

I ask you to avoid energy corridors within these proposed areas and WSA's and at minimum include in your analysis alternative routes which will not adversely impact these pristine areas.

The limited acreage included in the Colorado Wilderness Act of 2007 compared to the millions of acres of public lands already available for energy development, transmission siting, and multiple use is indicative of the diminishing presence of wilderness as a critical resource on our public lands. Our nation and future generations will be much poorer if we don't do what is necessary to avoid further winnowing of our special places and wilderness areas.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Diana DeGette".

Diana DeGette
Member of Congress