

Granby Pumping Plant – Windy Gap Transmission Line Rebuild Project

Western Area Power Administration

August 2007

Frequently Asked Questions

Questions specific to Tri-State or Mountain Parks Electric must be referred to Tri-State or Mountain Parks Electric staff.

1. Why is the project necessary?

The purpose of the project is to replace portions of the existing system to increase power reliability and quality to the electrical consumers in the region before the failure of the 69-kV Adams Tunnel cable. Western completed a study to assess the power system in the Grand Lake - Granby area after the anticipated failure of the Adams Tunnel cable. The results of this study indicated the need for this project.

2. Why has the process changed to an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)?

Western initially determined that an Environmental Assessment (EA) was the appropriate level of NEPA compliance for this project. However, based on a review of public comments, Western has instead determined that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared.

3. Which alternative will be built?

It is unknown which of the alternatives, if any, will be selected for implementation. Western is using the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to inform their decision-making. The NEPA process presents a range of alternatives and the environmental impacts associated with each. As part of the NEPA process, Western has identified a Proposed Action (Alternative C). The Preferred Alternative for project implementation will be identified in the last steps of the NEPA process, scheduled for Spring 2008.

4. How visible will the new poles be under Alternatives B or C?

Based on feedback from the July 2005 public meeting and further visual analysis with Grand County, BLM, and U.S. Forest Service, several changes were made to reduce the visibility and contrast of Alternatives B and C. For example,

- The pole type has been changed to a “Horizontal Vee” steel pole design to limit the amount of visual contrast compared to the taller and wider pole design originally presented at the July 2005 public meeting. This reduced the original height range from up to 130 feet to the current average pole height range of 75 to 105 feet.

- A brown, earth-toned COR-TEN® finish (self-weathering steel) was selected to reduce glare and compliment the dark conifer hues naturally found throughout the area.
- Minor adjustments were made to Alternative C’s alignment in three locations to avoid ridgelines and viewpoints from the Scenic Byway and the Arapaho National Recreation Area.



A COR-TEN® finished “Horizontal Vee” pole type is shorter and narrower than the original pole design.

5. Is burying the transmission line an option?

An alternative that buries (underground) the transmission line is being considered for further analysis. Typically, burying transmission lines results in greater installation and maintenance costs, and increases reliability risks in the event of an outage. Installing a high-voltage transmission line underground can also be a very intrusive process, often with relatively greater damage to cultural sites, streams, wetlands, wildlife habitats, and scenic resources than an overhead line.

6. Who will benefit from the project?

All local electric customers will benefit from the project. Project benefits include:

- Increased electrical system reliability and quality electrical service for the residents of Grand County
- Fewer brown- and black-outs
- Direct and indirect benefits of local services used by the transmission construction workforce

- Opportunity for local vendors, suppliers and contractors to provide services to the project during construction. Contractors may, and often do, hire local, qualified personnel to work on projects.

7. What is the relationship between the Granby Pumping Plant - Windy Gap Transmission Line Rebuild Project and the proposed Windy Gap Firing Project?

Western's Granby-Windy Gap Transmission Line project is an independent project and is not connected with the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District's (NCWCD) Windy Gap Firing Project.

8. Will the project pump more water out of Grand County?

Future changes in water diversion or storage is not associated with this transmission line rebuild and upgrade project. Water storage decisions for the NCWCD Windy Gap Project and for the Bureau of Reclamation's Colorado-Big Thompson Project are made by those agencies.

9. How much noise will be heard?

Corona-generated noise can be characterized by a hissing, crackling sound that, under certain conditions, may be accompanied by a hum. The effect is most noticeable during wet-weather conditions within the ROW or in areas immediately adjacent to the ROW. Corona-generated noise does not typically occur at the operating voltages proposed for this project.

10. What are the health effects of EMF?

Electric and magnetic fields are produced both naturally and as a result of human activity. These fields surround any electrical device, such as a power line, electrical wiring, or an operating appliance. Electric fields are produced by voltage and these fields are easily shielded by objects (e.g., trees, buildings, and skin). In contrast, magnetic fields are produced by current and these fields pass through most materials. Both electric and magnetic fields weaken with increasing distance.

Many studies have been conducted since the late 1970s to address the health effects of EMF. However, the results of these studies have been inconclusive. While some studies have suggested a weak statistical association between EMF and childhood leukemia, no causal mechanism or relationship has been established, either in theory or in the laboratory.

11. What will you pay for right of way?

In accordance with Federal law, Western will pay fair market value for the land rights, based on an independent appraisal. Additionally, Western will compensate property owners for damage to their property, whether that damage occurs in the easement or on the remainder of the property.

12. How much right of way will you buy, how wide?

Typically, ROWs for lines of this size are 100 feet wide for the length of the transmission line easement. For existing rights of way, an additional 70 feet of width would be necessary for Alternative B and portions of Alternative C. For new rights of way, 100 feet would be required for the majority of Alternative C.

13. Is it safe to farm/ranch next to these lines?

Yes. Care should be taken when operating equipment under the line, such as irrigation pipes and pivots. Operating equipment which can extend above 15 feet such as dump trucks, cranes, derricks, bale wagons and stack movers should not be operated under the line.

14. What are the other impacts to our land values?

Typically, the landowners' property is not affected beyond the easement. Western will pay fair market value for any loss to the part acquired as well as damages, if any, to the remainder of the owner's property.

15. How far will you stay away from my house?

One goal in siting the transmission line is to stay as far away from residences as possible. The distance from homes, barns, and other structures varies by alternative.

16. Will Western relocate my family if our home is located in the new ROW?

Western does not plan to relocate anyone for this project. The line would be designed to accommodate existing buildings.

17. Where will the transmission line structures (poles) be placed?

Exact pole locations will be determined after the preferred alternative has been identified.

18. Do Alternatives B and C use existing or shared utility corridors?

Alternative B would be located in Western's existing ROW. Alternative C would parallel portions of the Windy Gap pipeline ROW. Additionally, Alternatives B and C consolidate two 1.7 mile ROWs into one ROW from the Stillwater Tap to the Granby Pumping Plant.

19. When will the project be completed?

Public Draft EIS - Spring 2008

Final EIS - Summer 2008

Record of Decision Anticipated - Fall 2008

Anticipated Construction Start - 2009-2010

Planned Line In Service - 2010