

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

Boise, Idaho, January 31, 2008, 2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

Brian Mills: —on Federal Land in the West. I'm Brian Mills from the Department of Energy. I'll serve as the day's hearing officer. Before we begin the formal hearing, Peter Ditton, the associate state director of Idaho BLM, will make a brief opening statement. But first, if you haven't signed in to let us know that you want to speak at this meeting, you can do so at the front registration desk.

Handout materials are also available on the information table. Rest rooms are located out the front door and to the right. In the event of a fire or other alarm, please take your personal belongings with you and evacuate the building as quickly, quietly and safely as possible.

With us today representing the federal inter-agency team managing this work are Paul Johnson from the Forest Service and Kate Winthrop from the BLM. To answer questions and dig into the map for you is John Krummel with Argonne National Laboratory. Now I'll turn the mic over to Peter.

Peter Ditton: Thank you, Brian. Good afternoon and thanks for coming to give your comments on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the Designation of Energy Corridors on Federal Lands in the West.

As Brian said, my name's Peter Ditton. I'm the associate state director here in Idaho for the Bureau of Land Management. In a few moments, you'll hear a brief presentation about the document which the Department of Interior, Energy, and Agriculture are preparing to meet requirements in the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

Currently, applications for rights-of-way across 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 these projects that transport energy 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. The Programmatic EIS, developed under the National Environmental Policy Act, NEPA, 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 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 the 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 locations 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 been committed to this strategy and your comments will be valuable in helping to ensure that it's carried through the end of this planning effort. Representatives from DOE, BLM and the Forest Service are here to receive your comments and, on behalf of all three agencies, thank you again for your interest and participation.

Brian Mills: Thank you, Peter. Before we begin the hearing, a representative of the governor's office would like to speak, Paul Kjellander.

Unidentified Participant: [inaudible]

Brian Mills: Never mind. We're here to receive your oral comments on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. 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're having trouble hearing any speaker in the room, please signal me and I'll advise the speaker accordingly.

After everyone who wishes to comment has spoken, I'll close the hearing. So far, we have two people who have requested to speak on this issue today. Each of you will have ten minutes to make your presentation.

This hearing is to take comments on the 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 directs the secretaries to designate corridors for oil, gas, hydrogen pipe and electric transmissions lines on federal lands in 11 Western states, perform necessary environmental reviews, incorporate these designations into land-use 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 center line, 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 Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement proposes designating more than 6,000 miles of corridors: 62 percent would incorporate existing locally designated corridors or rights-of-way; 86 percent would be on BLM land; and 11 percent on Forest Service land.

The Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement 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 map. Some of these are proposed for upgrade only. In the case of existing previously designated utility corridors, amendments to land use plans designating 368 corridors would subject these corridors to the inter-agency coordination process described in the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement and they would be assigned Section 368 criteria. Using these 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 designation assists 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 of ownership, granted to allow construction and operation of a specific project that's often linear in character such as a utility line or 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 Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. Comments are due February 14th. We will analyze and respond to comments and complete the tasks necessary to prepare a final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. We expect this to be 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 impact statement is issued.

The Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement 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. 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 federal land managers to accommodate local land-use priorities, incorporate local knowledge of areas and avoid areas known to be incompatible with energy corridors. A handout summarizing this process and telling 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 the National Environmental Policy Act'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 in a 368-designated corridor and today we don't know when and where any projects will be proposed by applicants seeking to site pipe and/or transmission lines. As a result of this uncertainty, the environmental effects described in Chapter Three of the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement are necessarily more general than a site-specific analysis for a known project would be.

Comments will be more—most useful if they are specific, including suggested changes or methodologies, provide a rationale for your suggestions, and refer to a specific section or page number of the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement.

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 doesn't require stamps or envelopes.

I will call speakers in the order in which you've registered. Please step up to the microphone, clearly state your name and organization if you're representing one, before

making your comments. Please limit your oral comments to ten minutes so that everyone who wants to speak today may have a chance to be heard.

Our first speaker is Paul Kjellander. Our second speaker will be John Everingham.

Paul Kjellander:

Well, thank you very much. It's my intent to be as brief as possible and, in fact, the bulk of the comments that I wish to submit on behalf of the state of Idaho are in the form of letters from the Idaho Department of Fish and Game and also with the Idaho Department of Lands and the Idaho State Historical Society. So I'll be submitting those, along with my comments that I present orally today.

First, thanks for the opportunity to present the position of the state of Idaho regarding the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the Designation of Energy Corridors on Federal Lands in the 11 Western States. As I just mentioned, I have some written comments I'll be submitting and so hopefully my oral comments will be brief and to the point.

When the Energy Policy Act of 2005 was passed, I had great expectations that this process of identifying federal corridors would, perhaps, provide some more clarity to states and developers who wanted to see additional transmission capacity in the region. At that point, it was my desire that this process would go much further down the path of resolving critical issues associated with environmental impacts on the federal corridors that have been identified in the draft.

Unfortunately, the direction taken in this federal process hasn't resulted in the creation of any certainty related to environmental considerations within those federal corridors, and by avoiding these areas I think it's difficult for many of us to understand the full value of this process. We hope there's more clarity to what that value will be to developers going forward who intend to use federal corridors, somehow that'll become a little more clear as projects move forward.

And while I'm disappointed with this outcome, I also recognize that budgetary and time constraints and the site-specific considerations that resulted in the decisions that ultimately had to be made and, at the very least, one positive result of this venture is that we have a clearer idea of where the federal corridors will be located. But because none of the environmental considerations along these corridors have been fully addressed, it would appear that a developer seeking to utilize an existing corridor will see little, if any, benefit as a result of this process.

I am, however, able to take some comfort in the expression of collaboration that federal agencies have offered in relationship to projects that are proposed within these corridors and on that point I want to directly point to Jack Peterson and others at the federal who have gone above and beyond what I would consider to be normal behavior from any federal agency in an effort to make sure that we recognize that they are more than eager to be collaborative in this process. If that's the direction that the federal government intends to move with regard to collaboration, then I do feel much more assured in the ability, moving forward, that we'll see some things happen and I wanted to personalize recognize Jack's efforts along that path.

As we do move forward and look for opportunities to work with federal agencies to utilize these corridors, there are several key points that I'd like to present on behalf of the State of Idaho, and one is that when actual projects emerge, we would encourage full consideration that species and habitats identified within the Idaho Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy, especially as concerns arise related to species and habitats that have been identified as those of greatest conservation need. In the document that I'll submit as part of the formal record from the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, there's a more detailed listing of those

concerns surrounding possible mitigation considerations and that's listed and contained within that document.

The Department of Fish and Game also recommends that analysis and evaluation of energy corridors include a cumulative effects analysis of impacts to fish and wildlife resources and associated recreation. There's a concern that the sum total of connected and foreseeable project impacts, especially those related to energy and existed infrastructure development, could create a different scale of effect on fish and wildlife resources than from an individual project.

Another concern that I'll express deals with access to corridors as it relates to installation and routine maintenance. It's hoped that planned permanent legal access that minimizes the amount of road construction and allows for legal, all-purpose access to all parties is necessary to fully coordinate efforts in the long term and we hope that that's considered going forward.

Additionally, we support the concept of utilizing non-native species for re-vegetation of disturbed areas within the corridors and we believe this will allow for the full advantage of potential opportunities to be achieved within those corridors.

Another, final point that I'd like to make in reference to the Department of Lands is that, while this may not be the appropriate opportunity to have discussions related to land swaps with the federal government as it relates to establishing corridors, it certainly is something that we would like to plant a seed on as we move forward, because I believe that there is an opportunity for the state to, perhaps, work with the federal government closely to swap some lands today that may assist in the development of energy projects along those corridors.

So, again, I want to take an opportunity to say that there certainly is more within the state's position that I'll be handing and submitting today, but won't bother you with all of those details and, again, we thank you for the opportunity to present the state's position and, I hope, moving forward, that we'll have more opportunities to develop the collaborative effort that I think will be necessary to facilitate projects along those corridors.

Brian Mills:

John Everingham, followed by Dr. Peter Rickards.

John Everingham:

My name is John Everingham. I'm representing NorthWestern Energy. I'm going to read into the record a prepared statement. A formal letter with additional comments will be submitted by NorthWestern Energy prior to the close of the comment period on February 14th.

NorthWestern Energy is one of the largest suppliers of electricity and natural gas in the Upper Midwest and Northwest, serving more than 640,000 customers in Montana, South Dakota and Nebraska. NorthWestern Energy currently owns, operates and maintains approximately 7,000 miles of electric transmission 50 kV and above and approximately 2,000 miles of natural gas transmission in Montana.

NorthWestern appreciates the efforts of the Department of Energy, Department of Agriculture and the Department of Interior in developing the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. NorthWestern supports the proposed action discussed in the Draft PEIS that includes identification of energy corridors and the adoption of inter-agency operating procedures. NorthWestern Energy offers the following comments on the Draft EIS.

NorthWestern requests that the routes for the Mountain States Transmission Intertie, MSTI, project—and I'll be submitting a map—be considered for—be considered designated

corridors where they cross federal lands. This designation will be very helpful in the development of this project.

For Montana, the corridors on the individual state maps did not match the corridors on the large-scale map. Portions of Corridor 51–204 north of Helena, Montana, were left off the large-scale maps.

The PEIS tends to stress electric transmission development, even though the corridors in Montana are marked as multi-modal. The designation corridors are placed where electric transmission rights-of-way already exist.

NorthWestern had expressed in its earlier comments that it would like to see an expedited environmental permitting process for facilities located within the designated corridor. However, the Draft PEIS states that a project located within a designated corridor would be subject to each agency's ESA process. NorthWestern requests this be reconsidered and a joint approach be taken by the agencies in evaluating the environmental permits relative to the ESA. This would be a significant incentive to get projects to locate within the designated corridors.

Even though the report indicates that state agencies were involved in the PEIS process, it is not clear if any work was done to try to align corridors across federal lands with proposed or existing corridors on state and private land adjacent to federal facilities. Were the corridors across federal lands aligned with corridors across state lines? That's a question.

NorthWestern had urged in its earlier comments that the PEIS process for designating corridors should be ongoing to modify existing designated corridors or establish new designated corridors. The Energy Policy Act of 2005, Section 368(c), anticipated that this will become an ongoing process. The report does not indicate whether or not this process will be ongoing. Will this be addressed in the inter-agency operating procedures or the Record of Decision?

The next step in the process appears to be a Record of Decision from each agency. When can one expect the RODs to be completed? Once the RODs are completed, it appears that the land-use plans for affected agencies will be updated and uniform inter-agency operating procedures will be developed. When will this occur? Will the public have input to these processes?

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft PEIS. It's signed, "Sincerely, Michael R. Cashell, Chief Transmission Officer, NorthWestern Energy." Thank you.

Brian Mills:

Dr. Peter Rickards, followed by Mr. Brad Brooks.

Dr. Peter Rickards:

[inaudible] have a chance to talk with our state energy guy there, face to face, for the first time and I am Peter Rickards. I'm a podiatrist from Twin Falls, Idaho, and representing Idaho Families for the Safest Energy. I encourage you all to visit our website at www.myidahoenery.com and—let me get my breath. I ran in here. Excuse me.

Basically, I found out about the impact statement in 2006 when we were fighting Sempra Coal in Jerome—I live in Twin Falls, excuse me—and I read about it in the Phoenix paper. That was very—they were talking about building a private transmission line up from the growing areas of Phoenix into the supplier state of Idaho and I really didn't know we were a supplier state and, apparently, some people think and probably do know more than we do about what's coming.

But we see all sorts of transmission plans, private ones like the one from Phoenix. They're talking about cutting north and south through Idaho, basically connecting Canada to California, and there is on the map quite a cross section in the Idaho Falls area. So, basically, what my concern is, the nuclear energy—or, excuse me, Nuclear Power 2010 program basically invites commercial nuclear power plants on to the federal sovereign immune lands.

And in 1989, I—the second project I was fighting from Twin Falls was the—Jim McClure's NPR project, new production reactors, to which we sat through the impact statements on those. But he wanted to build 12 to 15 commercial nuclear power reactors out at the site and now we're seeing the first camel's nose under the tent. In the 2006, Idaho Power IRP, we have their plans saying that they will buy the commercial electric supply coming out of the first commercial reactor at INL in the year 2023.

And then we also have all sorts of merchant nuclear power plants coming in to Idaho. We did just beat Warren Buffett out, but more will be on the way. But, in general, it would not surprise me if Warren Buffett, with his money, showed up at INL to take advantage of this privatization of federal lands and I think that is one of the main reasons you see a big crisscross of sections going through the Idaho Falls area.

I realize there's other reasons that we have transmission lines through there, but Idaho basically is going to become an energy colony, if we allow it. So, on one level, we're fighting these—bringing the initiative here to try and protect our state from these things, but specifically on this energy corridor, when I found out about it in 2006 I thought to myself, we'll call for a hearing and that'll bring attention to it and when I looked through the impact statement, they already had the hearing in Boise. So it was nice to actually see it announced this time.

I did send my scoping questions in as an individual then, basically calling for building this western grid through the high—officially mapped out by the Department of Energy, the high geothermal areas, high wind areas and the high solar areas. And so I entered that as a scoping comment.

I've been extremely busy, but I did go through the executive summary and see things and even just talking with Paul Kjellander out there, this is really—they're not addressed. They are—the wordage I saw on page 21 or 40 of the web page of the executive summary said they were asked in the scoping hearings about renewables, but they are not doing it now. But they actually were looking at developed renewables, where are the power supplies now.

And—so this is the thing here, is we have all the governors from Schwarzenegger to Washington and Oregon and now Butch Otter calling for all sorts of elevated green renewable levels and there is a large difference between giving lip service to that and actually doing it. So the very issue that I called for in 2006 is not addressed yet.

So, I asked the scoping question and they didn't answer it. This has been my history of 19 years working on big projects with the federal government is you might see a little lip service to your scoping questions, but they're not there.

So, basically, I'm submitting to this impact statement again the official files from the DOE of these mapped-out areas and what we have is a chance—we're building a grid here, a brand-new grid, and it'll be there for a long time and if we use our brains, we will build it through the high mapped-out areas of renewable energies that will meet the lip service and actually provide the energy that we have. We actually can, with conservation, efficiency in appliances and renewables shut down the coal plants that are putting so much mercury into our fish at the moment.

But what we see is Idaho Power, one, dragging people through court for years over balking at obeying the law on—the mandatory law that says you have to buy back wind power and then, most recently, you have small wind producers and Idaho Power just says, well, okay, we lost our lawsuits, but now we're going to have to take it, so you small guys come up with \$60 million to connect your area to the transmission lines and then we'll buy it.

And what we have here is a chance to avoid that kind of lip service without doing intentionally so that they can own big power plants. If we build these grid lines through the high mapped-out areas, we minimize transmission losses and we wipe out the excuses not to be using them.

In 2007 here, December, Stanford left or, excuse me, published a peer-reviewed study, basically with the conclusion being in the simple terms we always hear like from our energy czar, wind power is nice, but it doesn't blow all the time. It doesn't blow all the time here, but it's always blowing somewhere and that's what Stanford studied and they basically said in the wind patterns we intricately studied in Iowa, wind power can provide a base load that is as sustainable as coal and cheaper and we all know it's better for the environment.

And so what we're seeing is Paul Kjellander framing the argument in coal versus nuclear and neither are acceptable to us and when there is so much wind potential around, we basically need to be scooting this energy supply all over the western grid as easily as possible, but we spent all this money on the impact statement and really haven't addressed the issue and don't appear to intend to.

And so that's about the summary of my things. Let me think on one other thing. Let me go through this little list I wrote out. Okay. A few more little areas.

There's been some transmission hearings in Blaine County and Lincoln County and it's very unclear—Blaine County's already fighting this, but I wasn't quite sure I heard the words today, but in the 2005 Energy Bill, it, from the federal level, overrides any right to protest, from what I could read. It's like this is going to be a mandatory thing and they've waived it and the phrase is something like so we don't interfere with businesses and so we can get on with things.

It is very unclear to me who will own these transmission lines. From the best I can tell, these are going to be federal corridors with private companies applying to own them. I'm not sure in this area—day and age of deregulation whether they have the right to charge people for the transmission lines, whether that will be controlled and minimized or are we going to see with this private line transmission scheme the basic California gouging, price-raising, “if you want to warm your house you're going to be paying 23 cents a kilowatt” by the time you get.

Is that what is best for our future? Are we thinking clearly on that?

So that, I think, does sum up what I'm saying. Let me just think a second, while I've got your attention. I think that is it. Are there any questions? All right. Thank you

Brian Mills:

Brad Brooks?

Brad Brooks:

My name is Brad Brooks and I am a regional conservation associate with the Wilderness Society.

I just want to make a few points real quick. Ensuring that people have a reliable power source certainly is important, but the broader impact of this process needs to be analyzed

and, much as the state mentioned, the impact to fish and wildlife, to visual resources, and to recreational resources are unclear because we're talking about a large swathe of public land. They are two-thirds of a mile wide.

And because these corridors are so large, the potential for physical and visual impacts need to be carefully considered, especially since several of the proposed corridors run through or within one mile of several protected landscapes, including several wilderness study areas, a birds of prey natural conservation area and several Forest Service inventoried roadless areas.

So, a few suggestions: We should make sure these pipelines are needed, analyze how the—how conservation and energy efficiency can maximize the use of existing transmission corridors and energy grids; we should special areas altogether, including national conservation areas, wilderness study areas, and inventoried roadless areas; and we should develop a range of alternatives that explores the possibility of increasing the use of renewables and decreases our use of fossil fuels.

I think having only two alternatives kind of is a way to skate through NEPA's mandate to have a wide range of alternatives and even though this isn't going to actually physically build any pipelines or any power lines, it will certainly open up the door for those sorts of activities to occur, and we need to explore the impact that this could have to wildlife, including sage grouse. The recent decision reconsidering that species for listing—we know that energy corridors have a fragmenting effect on sage grouse and mule deer and other species and all of those impacts need to be considered through this process.

Brian Mills:

David Sikes?

David Sikes:

Yes. My name is David Sikes. I'm an employee of Idaho Power Company. I'm the manager of transmission policy and development and I'm here today to represent some initial perspectives for Idaho Power, as well as indicate that we're going to file additional written comments.

First, just a very brief overview of Idaho Power Company. Idaho Power is an integrated electric utility company, serving approximately 470,000 customers or nearly one million people in a 24,000 square mile service area in Southern Idaho and Oregon.

With that, Idaho has a long history of involvement with and is a proponent of the designation of energy corridors. Additional high-voltage transmission lines are necessary to meet the growing electricity needs of the Treasure Valley, as well as Idaho Power Company's service territory and these corridors are also required to allow for continued economic expansion of the region and relieve transmission congestion in the West, increase reliability of the western electricity grid.

The role of corridors in meeting and future—in meeting the current and future energy needs of the West are very important. Because of this disparity between where energy sources and load centers are located, it's necessary to transport energy long distances. And in that we know that there are a lot of proposed resource development areas in different parts of the West, the load centers have largely grown up, just as Boise, Idaho, here has. There's not a lot of natural resource or energy fuel supply sources for production of electricity. So the development and delivery of energy resources to the communities is an essential function for the economic viability of the West.

The siting and permitting process has been a significant impediment to building new transmission lines, and we can go back and look at the National Transmission Grid Study and just the issue of how projects get put into place and the lead times involved in developing transmission. Again, we want to be very good stewards of the environment. We

do believe that corridor designation helps concentrate the impacts into areas that are acceptable to all parties and that's why we believe that this type of a process is a very good process to work through, rather than more of a scattered approach of everyone proposing whatever they want, wherever they want. So it at least allows us all to work together to take a very focused interest in what's getting prepared.

These corridors are needed to meet the local and regional interests. Again, the electricity grid is a west-wide interconnection. Power is transmitted both through Idaho and to Idaho from outside states and neighboring areas, and it does operate as one big electrical grid, in concert with the other regions. So it's important for these types of corridors and transmission lines to be able to function together and recognize not only local, but regional interests.

The predominance of public lands in the West requires that energy infrastructure be located on these lands. It's difficult, if not impossible, to site a resource in one area with a load center in another and not cross public lands in any way to get to connecting the two. Competing interests on land for both public lands, as well as private uses, necessitates that energy, a critical national resource, be included in and accounted for in the agency planning processes.

If implemented, these corridors would streamline energy projects by delineating a preferred corridor that has already been evaluated and thus would streamline the siting process, but we also understand that a proposed project would still go through the environmental permitting process and impacts would be evaluated, assessed and, if necessary, mitigated. We're not looking for any shortcuts to preempt or short-circuit that due diligence and what actually should take place, but what we are asking for is an expedited process that is complete and doesn't hold up the permitting and construction of these much-needed transmission lines in the West.

In addition to our involvement with the Western Energy Corridor Project, we also conduct similar planning efforts on a more local, as well as regional, level. Here in the Treasure Valley we have conducted a cooperative planning process with local entities, be it state governments as well as the community, called the Treasure Valley Electrical Plan, where we have developed and identified the transmission needs for the Treasure Valley. Similar efforts are going on throughout the state in the Wood River Valley, Magic Valley, and soon to be started in the Pocatello area.

Secondly, we're also involved in the Northern Tier Transmission Group. In fact, I am the chair of the Planning Committee of the Northern Tier Transmission Group, which has recently identified a number of major transmission projects within the region that do align with these proposed corridors and we had worked diligently with DOE and other entities in looking at how those different proposed projects would align. So, again, the projects proposed by both Idaho Power, as well as other utilities in the region, are very conscious of these efforts going on and try to utilize them, as appropriate.

Idaho Power applauds your efforts and the tremendous amount of time and resources that have been dedicated to meeting this need and addressed in the Energy Policy Act. Idaho Power will provide detailed written comments on the Draft Programmatic EIS in writing by the February 14th deadline.

Thank you.

Brian Mills:

Thank you. Would anybody else like to speak? If there are no other speakers, I am now going to close the hearing. If anyone would like to speak before our scheduled time is up, I will re-open the hearing.

Thank you for joining us today to provide oral comments on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement Proposing to Designate Energy Corridors on Federal Lands in the West.

Comments on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement 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 Programmatic Environmental Statement. Comments submitted after February 14th will be considered to the degree possible.

And, again, thank you for your attention and we'll now stay around to answer any questions.

Boise, Idaho, January 31, 2008, 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

Brian Mills: Good evening. Thank you for joining us for a public hearing on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact State on Designating Energy Corridors on Federal Lands in the West. I'm Brian Mills from the Department of Energy. I'll serve as the day's hearing officer.

Before we begin the formal hearing, Peter Ditton, the associate state director for Idaho BLM, will make a brief opening statement. But first, if you haven't signed in or let us know that you would like to speak, you may do so at the registration table.

Handout materials are also available on the information table. Rest rooms are located down the hall to the right. In the event of a fire or other alarm, please take your personal belongings with you and evacuate the building as quickly, quietly and safely as possible.

With us today representing the federal inter-agency team managing this work are Paul Johnson for the Forest Service and Kate Winthrop for the BLM. Now I'll turn the mic over to Peter.

Peter Ditton: Thank you, Bill. Good evening and thank you for coming to give your comments on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the Designation of Energy Corridors on Federal Lands in the West.

As Bill indicated, my name's Peter Ditton. I'm the associate state director here in Idaho for the Bureau of Land Management here in Boise, Idaho. 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. Excuse me.

Currently, applications for rights-of-way 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 situation by designating energy transport corridors and also performing necessary reviews of the environmental impacts of designation. The Programmatic EIS, developed under the National Environmental Policy Act, NEPA, 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 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 Preliminary Environmental Impact Statement using a three-

step process, which is detailed in the document in the handout available on the information table which represents—the presentation will also describe.

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From the beginning, the agencies have been committed to this strategy and your comments will be valuable in helping to ensure that it is carried through the end of this planning effort. Representatives from DOE, BLM and the Forest Service are here to receive your comments and, on behalf of all three agencies, thank you again for your interest and participation.

Brian Mills:

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This hearing is being webcast and transcribed, so speakers are asked to speak clearly and distinctly into the microphone. After everyone who wishes to comment has spoken, I'll close the hearing. So far, we have no people requested to speak on this issue this evening.

This hearing is to take comments on the 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 directs the secretaries to designate corridors for oil, gas, hydrogen pipe, and electric transmissions lines on federal lands in 11 Western states, perform necessary environmental reviews, 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 center line, 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 Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement proposes designating more than 6,000 miles of corridors: 62 percent would incorporate existing locally designated corridors or rights-of-way; 86 percent would be on BLM land; and 11 percent on Forest Service land.

The Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement 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 those—these are proposed for upgrade only. In the case of existing previously designated utility corridors, amendments to land use plans designating 368 corridors would subject these corridors to the inter-agency coordination process described in the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement and they would be assigned Section 368 criteria. Using these 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 designation assists 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 operations of a specific project that's often linear in character such as a utility line or 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 Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. Comments are due February 14th. We will analyze and respond to comments and complete the tasks necessary to prepare a final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. 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 Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement is issued.

The Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement 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. 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 federal land managers to accommodate local land-use priorities, incorporate local knowledge of areas and avoid areas known to be incompatible with energy corridors. A handout summarizing this process for determining where the proposed corridors would be located is on the information table and examples of specific corridors are also available on the project website.

We believe that the analysis of these alternatives meets the National Environmental Policy Act's requirement for a "hard look." Because the proposed action does not involve any site-specific, ground-disturbing activities, site-specific National Environmental Policy Act review will be required to support all proposed projects in a 368-designated corridor and today we don't know when and where any projects will be proposed by applicants seeking to site plant and/or transmission lines. As a result of the uncertainties, the environmental effects described in Chapter Three of the Draft are necessarily more general than a site-specific analysis for a known project would be.

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

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 doesn't require stamps or envelopes.

While agency representatives won't be answering questions during the hearing, we'll stay afterwards to discuss the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement with you. If there are no questions on the process, we'll now begin taking your comments.

Does anyone wish to make a comment? Hearing no other speakers, I will now close the hearing. If anyone would like to speak before our scheduled time is up, I will reopen the hearing and take your comments.

Thank you for joining us to provide oral comments on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement. Comments on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement 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. Comments submitted after February 14th will be considered to the degree possible.

Again, thank you and we'll stay around and answer any questions.



December 20, 2007

West-wide Energy Corridor PEIS
Argonne National Laboratory
9700 S. Cass Ave., Mail St. 4
Argonne, Illinois 60439

"The History and Preservation People"

Our mission: to educate through the identification, preservation, and interpretation of Idaho's cultural heritage.
www.idahohistory.net

C.L. "Butch" Otter
Governor of Idaho

RE: Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, *Designation of Energy Corridors on Federal Land in the 11 Western States*

Thank you for requesting our views on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, *Designation of Energy Corridors on Federal Land in the 11 Western States*. We find that the information provided in the draft PEIS on cultural resources is generally accurate, but very vague given the nature and scope of the analysis at this time. We understand that individual project proposals will provide more specific information.

It is important to remember that, like many western states, only a small percentage of Idaho has been surveyed for archaeological and historical properties. Therefore, we are not prepared to comment on potential effects on historic properties that may be located within the corridors delineated in Volume III. These discussions will occur during Section 106 Review consultation at the project level.

With linear projects of this magnitude, however, we are always concerned with visual effects on historic properties where landscape and setting are important. In considering the proposed corridors through Idaho, project proponents and agencies should be aware of the potential for visual effects on the various alternates of the Oregon Trail across southern Idaho. Some of the most pristine and well preserved segments of this important thread of the western history are located in our state, and many Idaho citizens are very concerned about Trail preservation. Early initiation of the Section 106 Review process and project design sensitive to historic properties are critical to avoid effects on this and other important properties. We are also concerned about potential visual and physical effects on sites such as the World War II Minidoka Internment Camp near Jerome, Fort Hall National Historic Landmark, City of Rocks National Historic Landmark, Cataldo Mission National Historic Landmark, mining sites in the Silver Valley, Native American traditional cultural properties, and historic districts.

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Boise, Idaho 83702-7695
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Fax: (208) 334-4059

Historic Preservation Office
210 Main Street
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Office: (208) 334-3861
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Historic Sites Office
2445 Old Penitentiary Road
Boise, Idaho 83712-8254
Office: (208) 334-2844
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Public Archives and Research Library
2205 Old Penitentiary Road
Boise, Idaho 83712-8250

Public Archives
Office: (208) 334-2620
Fax: (208) 334-2626

Research Library
Office: (208) 334-3356
Fax: (208) 334-3198

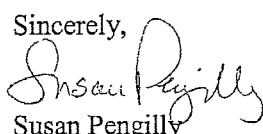
Oral History
Office: (208) 334-3863
Fax: (208) 334-3198



The Idaho State Historical Society is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

West-wide Energy Corridor PEIS
December 20, 2007
Page 2

We appreciate your cooperation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 208-334-3847, ext. 107.

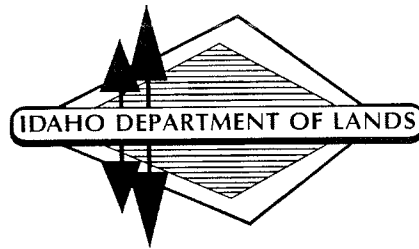
Sincerely,

Susan Pengilly
Deputy SHPO, Idaho

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JAN 30 2008

**DEPARTMENT OF
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GEORGE B. BACON, DIRECTOR
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

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Donna M. Jones, State Controller
Tom Luna, Sup't of Public Instruction

January 28, 2008

Mr. Paul Kjellander
Administrator
Idaho Office of Energy Resources
PO Box 83720
Boise ID 83720-0098

Dear Mr. Kjellander:

The Department of Lands appreciates the opportunity to participate in the unified State of Idaho response on the nationally important development of a power corridor through the State. As you know, the Idaho Department of Lands has a unique mission within State government as stated in the Idaho Constitution to "...maximize the long-term return to the endowments." This mandate provides the framework for our specific comments, and our comments reflect the need to ensure efficient decision making and processes to meet that mission.

To facilitate your efforts to consolidate the comments from the Idaho stakeholders, we have listed our DEIS comments in the bullet format below:

- The corridor is framed as an entirely negative environmental issue with only a single purpose. We see numerous opportunities to accomplish additional environmentally favorable outcomes such as the ability to create fire resistant fuel breaks once the infrastructure has been installed. This could provide protection not only to communities and man-made improvements, but also provide protection for critical wildlife habitat.
- Functionality must be the guiding principle of any mitigation within these corridors since it is likely there will be numerous entries for installation of future projects, and routine maintenance will be occurring. Planned, permanent legal access that minimizes the amount of road construction, and allows for legal, all-purpose access for all parties is necessary to fully coordinate efforts in the long-term.
- The authority to utilize non-native species for re-vegetation of disturbed areas by all parties is needed to take full advantage of opportunities within the corridors.
- The federal government should fully fund any known additional studies that need to be done for all corridor locations on all ownerships and begin that work as soon as possible. The federal government should not wait until a specific business applies to locate within the corridor. Idaho is only part of this nationwide effort to provide power infrastructure for the security and well being of the nation.

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- Locating corridors along perimeters of larger ownership management blocks should be used where possible.

Again we thank you for the opportunity to comment and express our concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George Bacon". The signature is stylized and cursive.

George Bacon
Director
Idaho Department of Lands

**IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**

600 South Walnut/P.O. Box 25
Boise, Idaho 83707

C.L. "Butch" Otter / Governor
Cal Groen / Director

January 23, 2008

Paul Kjellander
Administrator
Idaho Office of Energy Resources
322 East Front Street
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0098

Dear Mr. Kjellander:

In response to your request, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game (Department) has identified important issues related to the designation and development of energy corridors as proposed in the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impacts Statement (DEIS) for the Designation of Energy Corridors in eleven (11) Western States. The DEIS is a large and very important project in terms of energy development as well as natural resource conservation. These comments have been reviewed by the Idaho Office of Species Conservation and they have indicated that the Department has covered the issues appropriately. We appreciate any efforts you take to help identify and resolve issues related to the Department's mission to preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage fish and wildlife.

The Department bases our comments to this large and programmatic report on the following assumptions. First, while the issues the Department presents are general in nature, they are nonetheless important in terms of fish and wildlife habitat, populations, and public recreation for any project of the magnitude proposed in the programmatic DEIS. Second, the Department has not provided site-specific comments because we assume that each energy corridor project identified in the programmatic DEIS will require individual environmental analysis and review. Moreover, we anticipate Department staff will be afforded the opportunity to provide our expertise and fully participate in the review of each of these projects. Third, the Department realizes that oil, gas, hydrogen, and electricity corridors are proposed for many different and diverse areas of the state, and that all or only some of the fish and wildlife issues we present here may arise for any given project. This will depend on the size, location, and type of projects proposed. The Department's input at this time is intended to raise the most important issues appropriate to the programmatic approach used in the DEIS and is not intended to be a comprehensive environmental analysis, determination of project effects, or recommendations to mitigate or reduce project impacts.

The Department recommends that as energy corridor projects move forward, full consideration should be given to those species and habitats identified as those of greatest conservation need in the Idaho Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) (http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/cms/tech/CDC/cwcs_table_of_contents.cfm).

Paul Kjellander
January 23, 2008
Page 2

The Department offers the following list of programmatic fish and wildlife issues as considerations relevant to: 1) development of energy corridors in Idaho, 2) project specific and cumulative analyses, and 3) mitigation considerations for their effects.

1. Migration dependent species such as elk, mule deer, moose, pronghorn antelope, bighorn sheep, goats, and caribou may be impacted by development of 3,500-foot wide energy corridors and associated human disturbance within movement areas.
2. Seasonal ranges of elk, mule deer, moose, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, goats, and caribou may be lost or degraded as a result of habitat modification and human disturbance associated with energy corridor development.
3. Sage-grouse and sharp-tailed grouse populations and habitats could be affected by corridor development. Grouse may avoid or abandon otherwise suitable breeding habitat, brood areas, and other habitats near tall structures (i.e., towers) or when development within energy corridors degrades or eliminates such habitats. Towers with perching sites for raptors and nesting sites for corvids could result in reduced lek attendance and increased grouse predation and nest depredation rates.
4. Waterfowl and shorebird high-use areas, including wildlife management areas, national wildlife refuges, and areas of high and concentrated use during spring and fall migration, nesting, and brood rearing seasons, could be affected by energy corridor development.
5. Waterfowl and shorebird migration routes also may be affected.
6. Although sparsely documented, seasonal passerine bird migration routes may be affected by electrical transmission corridors, which may also increase mortality of migrating and resident birds.
7. Bat populations and habitats should be evaluated for direct and indirect impacts resulting from electric transmission corridor development.
8. Reptile and amphibian populations and habitats, particularly hibernacula, may be directly or indirectly impacted by transmission corridor construction, operation, and maintenance. Impacts to reptile and amphibian species of greatest conservation need should be assessed.
9. Direct and indirect impacts of transmission corridor construction, operation, and maintenance on resident and migratory raptor populations and habitats should be evaluated.
10. Loss and fragmentation of pygmy rabbit habitat through direct footprint effects and secondary project effects such as habitat fragmentation should be assessed.
11. Project effects on large carnivore (including grizzly bear, wolf, mountain lion, lynx, and wolverine) populations and habitats, including linkage corridors and genetic interchange, among the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, Central Idaho Wilderness, and grizzly bear recovery areas, should be addressed.
12. Increased motorized access to winter ranges, especially big game winter ranges, is a concern of the Department in relation to energy corridor development.
13. Road construction and the potential for increased public access resulting from construction and service roads can negatively impact wildlife and wildlife use of habitats. Road construction and maintenance (or lack thereof) can significantly impact watershed function and stability including fish and other aquatic organism habitats.

Paul Kjellander
January 23, 2008
Page 3

14. Best management practices are necessary to ensure water quality is maintained, disturbance caused by crossings of any perennial and fish bearing waters is minimized, and disturbed instream habitats are restored. Maintaining connectivity for populations of migratory fish is also essential both during and after construction.
15. The location of the transmission corridors in relation to rare and/or sensitive wildlife habitats including kipukas, lava tubes, caves (natural and man-made), permanent and seasonal wetlands, riparian areas, sensitive and listed plant species, and white-bark pine and old growth forest stands should be evaluated.
16. The effect of energy corridor construction and development on fire occurrence, frequency, and severity; especially as it relates to important shrub-steppe and forest habitats, should be analyzed.
17. It is important to avoid fragmentation of large contiguous blocks of wildlife habitats by transmission corridor construction, operation, and maintenance.
18. Restoration and mitigation of effects due to the project footprint are important to ensure no critical loss of habitat or fish and wildlife populations results from energy corridor development.
19. Relatively little is known about the wildlife and wildlife habitats in many areas, thus monitoring and evaluation of fish and wildlife resources and habitats is vital. Baseline information about fish and wildlife resources and recreation for any project is necessary to understand and reduce project impacts. Monitoring the effects of corridor projects is also necessary to determine long-term effects and, accordingly, to adaptively manage the design, operation, and mitigation measures of the project.

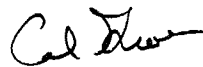
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In connection with energy corridor development, the Department recommends consideration, identification, and evaluation of indirect impacts of the project on fish and wildlife resources and associated recreation. Such an analysis might assess effects to recreation and public access, patterns of transportation and other infrastructure development, occurrence and management of noxious and invasive weeds, and occurrence and management of fire. The development and siting of other energy resources including wind, solar, hydropower, and nuclear power facilities need to be considered with this broad corridor context from the perspective of land use and development patterns, and human disturbance and activities.

Paul Kjellander
January 23, 2008
Page 4

The Department appreciates the opportunity to contribute to coordinated state comments about this important issue. If you desire further policy discussion about our comments, please contact me. If you need any additional technical information or have any questions about our comments, please contact Gregg Servheen, Program Coordinator at (208) 287-2713 or gserveen@idfg.idaho.gov.

Sincerely,



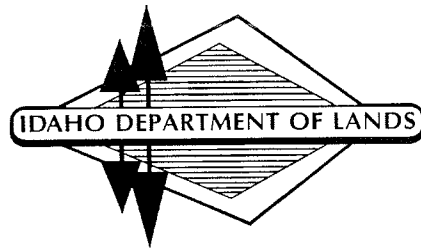
Cal Groen
Director

CG:gs

JAN 30 2008

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January 28, 2008

Mr. Paul Kjellander
Administrator
Idaho Office of Energy Resources
PO Box 83720
Boise ID 83720-0098

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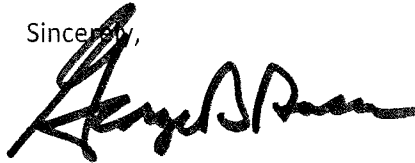
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George Bacon
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Idaho Department of Lands



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

600 South Walnut/P.O. Box 25
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C.L. "Butch" Otter / Governor
Cal Groen / Director

January 23, 2008

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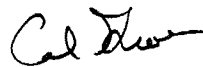
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