

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

Washington, DC, February 5, 2008, 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m.

LaVerne Kyriss: So, good afternoon, everyone. Are we live on the webcast? Okay.

Good afternoon. I'd like to thank you for joining us for a public hearing on a 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 will serve as today's hearing officer.

Before we begin the formal hearing, Ray Brady, who is the Energy Policy Act implementation manager at the Bureau of Land Management, will make a brief opening statement.

But first, if you have not signed in or let us know that you want to speak at this meeting, you can do so right now at the registration table, which is right outside this door.

We also have some handout materials for you at a table in the back of the room. We've got a one-page project fact sheet that has a map on the back. And we have some samples of how we got to the corridors, from the conceptual process to where we are today in the draft corridors. Those are also available for you. And if you don't have the EIS, we have it for you on CD as well back there.

Restrooms are also located down the hallway on the right.

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 and quietly and safely as possible. And our registration desk folks can direct you if necessary, if we have to evacuate.

With us today representing the federal interagency team managing this work are Kate Winthrop from BLM, right here, and Paul Johnson, a couple rows behind here, right there.

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

And now, I'd like to turn the mic over to Ray.

Ray Brady: Thank you very much, LaVerne.

Good afternoon to you and thank you for coming today to provide your comments on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the Designation of Energy Corridors on Federal Lands in the West. My name is Ray Brady. I'm manager of the Energy Policy team for the Bureau of Land Management here in our Washington, DC, office.

In a few moments you will hear a brief presentation about the corridor EIS, which the Departments of Interior, Department of Energy and Department of Agriculture are preparing to meet the requirements of Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

Currently, applications for rights-of-ways to cross federal lands are considered on a case by case basis, with limited coordination among the various federal agencies, which are often involved with projects that transport energy across long distances in the West.

In 2005, Congress directed the federal agencies to address this situation by designating energy corridors, and also performing necessary reviews of the environmental impacts of such designations. A Programmatic EIS developed under the National Environmental Policy Act represents that environmental review performed by the federal agencies. It's important to note that another round of site-specific NEPA analyses will be completed for each project proposed for a location within any of these designation corridors.

The Draft EIS, which we're visiting on today, was released on November 16th, 2007 for public comment. The Department of Energy, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service developed the corridor locations proposed in the Draft EIS, using a three-step process which is detailed in the EIS. We also have handout materials in the back of the room, as LaVerne has indicated, and the presentation will also provide additional information on that process.

In essence, today's hearing represents Step Four in that public process. Public comments will help the agencies further refine the locations of individual corridors so that important goals of the project are met; one, balancing the need for improving energy delivery in the West, and also protecting our many resources that are found on our federal lands.

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

The representatives from DOE, BLM, and the Forest Service are here today to receive your comments. And on behalf of all three agencies, I thank you for your participation and interest in this process. Thank you.

And LaVerne?

LaVerne Kyriss:

Thank you, Ray.

We are here today 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—and we'll take comments over here. If you are having trouble hearing a speaker, please signal me and I will notify that speaker accordingly. After everyone who wishes to comment has spoken, I'll temporarily close the hearing. So far we have four people who have signed up to speak. Each of you—we'll give you as long as you need. Typically, we start off with about five minutes, but with so few people we'll just let you make your statements and we'll go from there. And I probably won't be signaling you that you need to wrap up.

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 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 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 designate corridors in the other 39 states.

This 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 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 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.

Rights-of-way permits include 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 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 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 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 this 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 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 are specific, if they involve suggested changes or methodologies, if they 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 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 this microphone right here and clearly state your name and your organization, if you're representing one, before you make your comments. I will advise you when you have 30 seconds left. But actually, we probably won't do that since we only have about three people right now. After everyone who has registered has commented, then I will ask if anyone in the audience wants to make additional comments. After those people have had a chance to speak, I'll go back and ask if anyone wants to add to their comments.

After everyone has had a chance to speak, we will temporarily close the hearing and we'll remind you of how to submit comments are when they are due.

If you're speaking from a prepared statement, we'd ask you to leave a copy at the registration desk. If you're not able to do that today, we'd ask you to submit that via the project website.

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

Are there any comments on the process we're going to use today to take comments? Any questions? I don't see any questions. So, we will start to take comments.

Our first speaker is—and I'm probably going to mispronounce this—Shelini Vajjhala. I'm probably mispronouncing that. That person hasn't signed in yet, but—. So, is Richard Loughery here? Sir, if you want to come up and take the microphone.

Richard Loughery:

Good afternoon. My name is Rick Loughery, or Richard Loughery, and I'm speaking on behalf of the Edison Electric Institute, or EEI.

EEI thanks the federal agencies involved in preparing the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, or PEIS, for the designation of energy corridors on federal lands in the 11 western states. EEI is the association of U.S. shareholder owned electric companies. A number of EEI's member companies generate, transmit and deliver electricity in the contiguous 11 western states covered in the Draft PEIS.

Overall, EEI applauds the efforts of the lead federal agencies, the Department of Energy and the Bureau of Land Management, as well as the cooperating federal agencies, being the Forest Service, Department of Defense, and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

EEI is aware of the tremendous effort and time spent to designate the energy corridors identified in the Draft PEIS. It has not been an easy task, but it is one that is necessary to deliver reliable energy to consumers in the 11 Western states.

Given the predominance of federal land ownership in the West, the federal land agencies must be a partner in helping to meet the energy infrastructure needs of the region. Congress recognized this need by including Section 368 in the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

We strongly recommend that the agencies include a robust discussion of the congestion and reliability concerns within the Western grid under the section in the PEIS discussing the purpose and need for the 368 corridors. While the agencies are required to make the corridor designations under EPAct 2005, Congress fully understood the vulnerabilities in the Western grid and intended those corridors to help address those, and that should be more—and this we feel should be more robustly outlined in the EIS document.

EEI expressed support for the agencies' work to implement EPAct Section 368 during the scoping process in the fall of 2005, and in response to the initial maps joining potential corridors in July 2006. EEI and its members remain committed to the designation of energy corridors on federal lands in the Western states. We feel that the West-wide regional approach taken is the most efficient way to address the need for energy corridors from an energy, environmental, and land management perspective.

EEI's comments today are general in nature. We will not comment on specific corridors that are include or excluded in the Draft PEIS. However, we do encourage the federal agencies preparing the PEIS to include additional corridors and modifications to proposed corridors as identified by EEI member companies and other utilities that will be relying on the corridors. Those utilities know where additional energy facilities are most likely—have to be located in the future to live—excuse me—to deliver energy from its source to where the load is.

We encourage the agencies to recognize the important transmission siting provisions that Congress also included in Section 1221 of EPAct. Under Section 1221, for example, the Department of Energy is responsible for designating national interest corridors where transmission congestion is serious and needs to be addressed. The Section 1221 corridors will encompass both federal and non-federal lands, and the Section 368 designations should take these 1221 designations into account. Sorry for all the section numbers.

Further under Section 1221, the Department of Energy is responsible to act as lead agency for overall federal permitting of electric transmission facilities and the interest of streamlining the permitting process. The agencies should use this lead agency process to streamline authorizations for use of federal lands, including the Section 368 corridors.

The PEIS draft indicates that a total of 6,055 miles of corridors have been proposed for designation. Roughly 62 percent of the proposed corridors would incorporate existing corridors and rights-of-way. EEI commends the federal agencies for avoiding sensitive areas such as national parks, wilderness areas, tribal lands, national monuments, and other national recreation areas.

While 6,055 miles of corridors is significant, we feel they are not totally adequate to meet the needs in the western states for new transmission to reliably serve the load centers. The identified corridors may not be sufficient to bring renewable, [unintelligible] coal and other types of electric power generation from source to end users.

EEI strongly urges the interagency team to include in the Final PEIS the corridors individual utilities recommended be designated during the scoping process and in comments since then. The recommended corridors will be critical for relieving congestion, improving reliability, and meeting the demand for additional electricity from a West-wide perspective.

We feel additional corridors can be designated without intruding on any of the sensitive lands. The Draft PEIS specifies a default width of 3,500 feet for the proposed energy corridors. At first glance, this may seem wide enough to accommodate multiple energy rights-of-way. However, in EEI's July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006, written comments on the preliminary draft corridor maps, we stated that corridors must be wide enough to guarantee safe and reliable operations of multiple facilities.

In reviewing the Draft PEIS, our member companies have expressed concerns that the proposed 3,500-foot width is suboptimal from a reliability perspective and not wide enough to accommodate multiple facilities in general, and transmission facilities in particular. This proposed width in many cases may not be sufficient to enable the future location of facilities and rights-of-way in a manner that's most efficient, compatible with local topography and minimize environmental effects. We would propose a one-mile standard width and the option for utilities to request wider corridors as necessary to address these concerns.

The purpose of the PEIS approach is to expedite the process [unintelligible] of actual energy project rights-of-way within the designated corridors. We believe the federal agencies concur with this. However, our member companies have expressed concern that the Draft PEIS does not clearly delineate how projects proposed to be sited within the corridors actually will be expedited compared to the current process. If benefits for a siting within a corridor do not result in actual cost and time savings, there will be little incentive for a full utilization of a designated corridor.

The Draft PEIS makes reference to potential impacts of electric and magnetic fields, or EMF, from transmission lines on wildlife in general and, in particular, avian species. The body of evidence from scientific studies does not support a conclusion of adverse impact of—excuse me, on wildlife from exposure to EMF. The Draft PEIS statements on EMF impacts on wildlife are misleading and should not be included in the final PEIS.

The document also recommends transmission lines to be designed and constructed in conformance with the Avian Protection Plan guidelines produced by the Avian Power

Line Interaction Committee, or APLIC, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2005. As a point of a clarification, the APP guidelines do not contain specific line design criteria and are intended to be used in conjunction with the document “Suggested Practices for Avian Protection on Power Lines, The State-of-the-Art in 2006,” jointly prepared by EEI, APLIC, and the California Energy Commission. This correct cited document should be included and referenced, and the APP guidelines as a mitigation measure removed in the final EIS.

The draft identifies a number of potential environmental effects that might result from the siting of the facilities and corridors. On one hand, the Draft PEIS can perform a useful function by narrowing the range of essential [unintelligible] so those constitute, excuse me, the outside bound what might have to be studied further in siting a given facility. On the other hand, the PEIS needs to make abundantly clear that a given facility typically will raise only a subset of such potential effects and only some of those may require further study in the actual analysis of proposed projects.

In conclusion, EEI and its member companies are very supportive of the Draft PEIS and we recommend the changes I just discussed as ways to improve the document. We hope that you'll give serious consideration to our comments in preparing the Final PEIS, and we will be submitting detailed written comments by the February 14th, 2008, deadline. Thank you very much.

LaVerne Kyriss:

Thank you, Mr. Loughery. Our next speaker will be Arun Soni—I'm probably mispronouncing that—followed by John Garder. So, Arun?

Arun Soni:

My name is Arun Soni and I am speaking on behalf of the Wilderness Society. We have an office in Washington, DC, and we also have offices in other parts of the country. And I would like to first say thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak.

And my goal here right now is to just reemphasize some of the points that were made by our staffers out in the regional offices, because they were valid points and it's important to go over those once again.

So first, the proposed designation in the Draft Programmatic EIS will have significant impacts to wildlife, habitat, cultural resources, recreation opportunities, and many other resources on federal lands across the West. For this reason, we need to ensure that certain criteria are met.

First, we need to ensure that new pipelines or power lines are actually needed. Agencies should analyze the potential to meet growing energy demands through increased energy efficiency, distributed generation, and maximizing the use of the existing power grid through technology upgrades before turning to additional or wider corridors on our public lands.

We also need to ensure that federal lands are necessary locations and special or sensitive public lands are avoided altogether. Agencies should continue analyzing impacts to special public lands and moving corridors to avoid them.

Agencies should also make this process and information transparent to the public.

We have to ensure that projects are subjected to best management practices to limit damage to other resources, recreation and views. Agencies should make their interagency operating procedures mandatory.

Risks to federal land and other affected lands should also be addressed. They need to be thoroughly and realistically assessed so that those risks can be avoided or minimized. Agencies should analyze cumulative impacts to both federal lands and state, private and tribal lands which will be impacted when the corridors are connected.

We also need to ensure that, once appropriate locations are identified, projects on federal lands are presumptively limited to those corridors. Agencies should limit projects on federal lands to corridors. Simply put.

We also need to ensure that consideration is given to improving access for renewable energy such as wind and solar. Agencies should take the opportunity to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, limit the effects of climate change and help build a sustainable energy future for the West by seriously evaluating alternatives to maximize use of renewable energy.

We also need to ensure that we avoid areas in pending legislation. Wildlands included in recently introduced wilderness bills will also be impacted by the proposed corridors. Analysis of such impacts has not been completed yet, but as agencies are provided with relevant information they should consider moving or modifying the corridors.

Furthermore, we must ensure that alternatives are presented and considered. Without alternatives, the public can only comment on what they don't like about the proposed plan. The agencies, who have all the pertinent information, should provide the public with choices. That's why NEPA requires them to develop alternatives.

I would like to give just one specific example. And this relates to the state of Idaho. There are proposed corridors for 19 miles through the Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area which were established—and this conservation area was established to protect one of the densest known raptor populations in North America, including the habitat of the raptor prey base, as well as the nesting and hunting habitats of raptors within the conservation area.

National conservation areas are not included in the list of sensitive resources impacted by the proposed corridors, nor are there requirements for any corridors in those areas to comply with the management priorities set out in the legislation establishing them. And this is just one of the many specific issues that needs to be addressed.

So, I thank you for the time and I hope you will consider these comments.

LaVerne Kyriess:

Thank you, Mr. Soni. Our next speaker will be John Garder.

John Garder:

Thanks very much for the opportunity to comment. My name is John Garder. I work for the Wilderness Society as well. I'm actually home sick today, but came down to comment. I appreciate the opportunity immensely. And I came down because I care a lot. As a guy who works for the—on the National Landscape Conservation System on behalf of the Wilderness Society, and as a member of the American public who cares a great deal about our public lands and how they are used for current and future generations.

I come down as someone who spends a lot of time out working passionately on behalf of our public lands and the many diverse uses of those lands, but also as someone who will maybe be a father someday who will have children who will want to recreate and in other ways enjoy our public lands. As a recreator myself and as someone who recognizes that a lot of families, small businesses and others increasingly rely upon the many diverse uses of our public lands in the American West and throughout the country.

My comments will be focused today specifically on the National Landscape Conservation System, which is administered and managed by the Bureau of Land Management. Twenty-six million acres in this system. And the question of national monuments, national conservation areas, wild and scenic rivers, national scenic and historic trails, wilderness areas, and wilderness study areas and other special places.

The mission of this system is to conserve, protect, and restore nationally significant landscapes that have outstanding cultural, ecological, and scientific values for the benefit of current and future generations. This objective will be undermined if the energy corridors were designated today as they're now proposed in the draft.

I want to begin first by thanking the DOE for improvements made in this draft from the scoping process. There were a few conservation system units that were intersected in the initial map released that were moved to go around these areas in the draft. We appreciate that immensely.

Specifically, the Sonoran Desert and Cascade-Siskiyou National Monuments were two units with corridors slicing through their middles. We appreciate that DOE and BLM saw these areas as too sensitive for expediting energy development. I ask the agencies today to take these steps for all conservation system units and to find a way to avoid these special landscapes in the name of conservation.

There are currently over 100 conservation system units either directly intersecting or within a mile of a designated corridor. I have an extensive list here with me. Since time is limited, I'll only discuss a few of these units that have corridors running directly through them.

First, the BLM's flagship monument. This was the first monument in the Conservation System, the Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument in Southern Utah. The presidential proclamation creating that monument provides for the protection of the area's remote, undeveloped, primitive frontier state. It's true that this corridor follows a previously designated right-of-way for one electricity power line, but this alone should not allow the agency to expedite construction of oil and gas and hydrogen development and more electricity transmission in this largely undeveloped landscape.

A couple of years ago was the tenth anniversary of that national monument which was a fantastic occasion to acknowledge support both within the BLM for that monument and within the Department of Interior, but also among the public. A lot of folks living around that monument have really come to recognize that it is a very special place that, among other things, provides important economic opportunities for the surrounding area. If you go and visit, if you haven't already, you'll notice that there are a lot of small businesses that are established and are popping up every year that are benefiting economically from that monument. And we would hate to see the future economic opportunities of places like Grand Staircase compromised by these corridors.

Also, Southwest Idaho's Snake River Birds of Prey National Conservation Area, which my colleague mentioned. It's a unit that was established to protect one of the densest-known raptor populations in all of North America. A 3,500-foot corridor for all uses designated for the purpose of speeding up the application and construction process in this area will undoubtedly contradict the NCA's purpose for being included in the conservation system.

Finally, I want to mention the Lower Deschutes Wild and Scenic River in Oregon. The outstandingly remarkable values it was designated for include an incredible geologic and

cultural history, a diverse community of fish, wildlife and vegetation, and an abundance of recreational opportunities. The expansion of the current corridor to 3,500 feet for expedited construction of all uses will disturb the values of the river and runs counter to the river's addition to the conservation system.

Of course, the list of Conservation System units affected by this process goes on. We urge the agencies to consider all of these units and the value of their preservation for current and future generations. We ask that the National Landscape Conservation System be given the same consideration and protection from this process that national parks and wilderness areas were given.

You have a great opportunity to help drive future transmission in the West and should do so without degrading this vital system. As you know, this proposal could affect not just conservation system units, but many other public lands including wildlife refuges, national recreation areas, national conservation areas, ACECs, roadless areas, wilderness areas, WSAs, and other lands identified with wilderness characteristics.

Just to conclude, I want to say again there are many diverse uses for our public lands. You all are concluding a series of hearings. We appreciate the opportunity for folks like myself to come meant a great deal. You've heard from a lot of people like myself who care a lot about these landscapes and want to see them adequately protected for future generations. And we hope that you can really consider all of our comments and think about how to do this right in both meeting the transmission needs of the growing West, while also protecting our natural and cultural heritage for future generations.

Thank you.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you, Mr. Garder. I want to find out is Shelini Vajjhala is here yet? If not, our next speaker will be Richard Peterson-Cremer.

Richard Peterson-Cremer: My name is Richard Peterson-Cremer. I work for the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance in our Washington, DC, office. The point of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance, our goal is to protect and preserve the remaining wild Bureau of Land Management plans throughout the state of Utah. I'd like to thank the DOE for the opportunity to comment here today. And we look forward to working with you to improve upon our concerns.

We're trying to bring attention to the unnecessary corridors through Moab, Utah, which is a world-renowned destination for people who want to visit the spectacular public lands landscape of Southern Utah in the middle of the Colorado Plateau. We believe this corridor is unnecessary as there is a parallel corridor going through Colorado the—this Moab Corridor eventually hooks into. We're proposing that the DOE reroute the corridor going through Moab from Green River to Grand Junction along the I-70 corridor rather than traveling from Green River down to Moab, which crosses the Green River at the portal, then continuing south of town eventually crossing over to that same Colorado corridor.

The number of the corridor is—that goes through Moab is 66-212. In order to relocate it along I-70 there would probably have to be an adjustment to head north of the highway along the—to avoid the Colorado National Monument. But it would then link to the Colorado corridor at segment 132-136, probably north of I-70, hopefully adjust to skirt the South Shale Ridge Citizens Proposed Wilderness Area in Colorado. At this point, 66-212 looks like it would join with the Colorado corridor anyway, just farther south where the segment is numbered 130-274.

Our reasoning for this adjustment is that the corridor will clearly cut within the outstanding viewshed of Arches National Park, pretty much Utah's most famous national park along with the Canyon lands. Currently, the viewshed from Arches includes no developed areas or industrial sites whatsoever. Even the town of Moab is protected from the park viewshed.

The proposed corridor would dramatically impact the viewshed from Arches National Park. The corridor would not only affect that viewshed, but would also affect the dark night skies and generate noise levels inappropriate for areas surrounding national parks.

The corridor also crosses through spectacular world-famous scenery outside of the park that is proposed for wilderness within Americans' Red Rock Wilderness Act. This includes 1,000-foot high cliffs, slick rock domes, streams and floodplains, sensitive soils, critical wildlife habitats, proposed wilderness and existing wilderness study areas will also be impacted along the proposed corridor.

The corridor is also proposed to cross the Colorado River at the portal near Moab, which is a very tall and narrow passageway carved by the river. And it's forced through a 1,000-foot tall vertical windgate and sandstone cliffs. Windgate and Navajo sandstone cliffs. The portal on the Colorado River deserves better than to be violated by this incongruous industrial blight.

The town of Moab is actually in the crosshairs of this corridor and is unavoidable. The town of Moab lies within a very narrow valley, approximately one to one and a half miles wide between steep sandstone walls. The proposed corridor has a mysterious gap as it reaches the town of Moab, and we see this throughout the PEIS as it approaches private land and protected public lands.

If this corridor is eventually approved, private property would most likely be taken by the federal government to connect the corridor dots on the north and south ends of town. If private property is not taken, then the corridor will necessarily have to run along the iconic Moab Rim on the west side of the valley or along the Mill Creek rim on the east side. Both of these rims are within designated BLM wilderness study areas, which are meant to preserve the wilderness characterous lands until future wilderness designation.

The good news is that this corridor can, as I said before, easily be rerouted to address most of these concerns. Rather than continuing southeast from Green River, the corridor should be directed along the I-70 corridor to connect the north/south energy corridor in Western Colorado. There is no compelling reason to have this proposed corridor impact sensitive natural resources, Arches National Park, the Colorado River, and private property owners in Moab, Utah.

I thank you for your time and for the opportunity to comment on the PEIS.

LaVerne Kyriess:

Thank you, Mr. Cremer. Did Mr. or Ms. Vajjhala come in? If not, I have no other speakers registered. So, are there any other folks in the meeting today who would like to make a comment for the record? If there are no other speakers at this time, then we will take a recess.

So, I'm going to temporarily close the hearing. 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 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, I'd like to thank you for your attention and we will now stay around to informally discuss the Draft PEIS with you.

If someone comes in and wants to make a comment, or if you want to make a comment on the record, we will reconvene and go back on the record. So, thank you again.

[Recess.]

LaVerne Kyriss:

—Conversation. But, if I could get you to come back and join us, we will reconvene. And I will call Donna Smith up to this microphone. Did I catch you too soon, Donna? I'm so sorry. So, take your time. Get yourself settled and then we'll let you make your comments. And Donna, if you could tell us your name and, if you're representing an organization, give us that, please.

Donna Smith:

I apologize for missing the presentations. I was touring the neighborhood looking for the right hotel.

I'm Donna Smith. I am a resident of the District of Columbia. To celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Wilderness Act in 1989, a group of wilderness supporters formed a nonprofit grassroots advocacy organization based on the voices and activism of elders to protect and preserve wilderness and wildlands. They are the Great Old Broads for Wilderness.

Today, there are broads of all ages, both genders, in every state working to protect America's last wild places. As a board member of the organization, I am here to comment on the Draft PEIS for the West-wide Energy Corridor on their behalf.

There are three main points we'd like to make. First, this plan proposes to designate 6,000 miles of these corridors through public land in 11 Western states with one prescription—for placement of multiple kinds of energy transmission and pipelines with an average width of 3,500 feet, two-thirds of a mile, roughly the distance between the Washington Monument and the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

A one-size-fits-all plan does not address the widely varied geology, habitats, and native archeological rarities of the West as individual treasures. That the Draft PEIS does limit the width of the corridor in the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico along the Rio Grande River to 1,500 feet demonstrates an understanding of the critical importance of aligning routes carefully through all sensitive areas. We don't think that's the only one in the country.

Number two: Development of the proposed areas must be in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act and the Endangered Species Act. Archeological treasures such as Native American ruins, petroglyphs, pictographs, must be considered and preserved, even if a straight line corridor following a single existing transmission line today is more convenient.

Habitat and wildlife corridors are not fungible, with alternative land traps, no matter how similar they may appear to be. For example, on the Western coast, California, coastal sage scrub may appear to be a single kind of habitat, but it covers a hilly range with elevations from sea level to even up to 2,000 feet. Yet, one particular bird only dwells in that habitat between 500 and 1,000 feet. And if that's where the power line says it has to go two-thirds of a mile wide, it could completely destroy the habitat for that bird for many miles.

Likewise, a single grizzly bear requires over 450 acres as its own personal territory. Think again. A two-thirds mile wide corridor completely across its range committed to eventual uses for oil or gas or hydrogen pipelines, electricity transmission lines and their related infrastructure such as access maintenance roads, compressors, pumping stations and such. It would completely bifurcate and, for its purposes, destroy that grizzly bear's territory.

Number three: While energy corridors may be needed, their installation on public lands must be considered when they are needed on a case by case basis—with a comparative evaluation of other uses of this public land

We must ask: Are new pipelines or power lines actually needed now? Are federal lands the necessary and only location? Are sensitive public lands avoided? Are projects subjected to best management practices to limit damage to other resources, recreation and vistas? Are the risks to federal and other affected lands fairly assessed and minimized? Is consideration also given to improving access for renewable energy, such as wind and solar?

This land is not your land or my land. It's our land to be prudently preserved in trust for our children's grandchildren to experience and love as we do.

On behalf of the Great Old Broads for Wilderness, thank you.

LaVerne Kyriss:

Thank you, Ms. Smith. Is there anyone else here who wanted to make additional comments for the record? If not, we'll go back into recess and into informal discussions. Thank you.

**Western Energy Corridors Designation  
EPAct Section 368  
Designation of Energy Corridors on Federal Land in the  
Eleven Western States**

**Draft Programmatic EIS Public Hearing  
February 5, 2008  
Washington, DC**

**Oral Statement  
Richard M. Loughery  
Edison Electric Institute  
Director, Environmental Activities**

The Edison Electric Institute, EEI, thanks the federal agencies involved in preparing the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) for the Designation of Energy Corridors on Federal Lands in the Eleven Western States for the opportunity to comment on the PEIS. EEI is the association of United States shareholder-owned electric companies. A number of EEI's member companies generate, transmit, and deliver electricity in the contiguous eleven Western states covered by the Draft PEIS.

Overall, EEI applauds the efforts of the lead federal agencies, the Department of Energy and the Bureau of Land Management, as well as the cooperating federal Agencies, the US Forest Service, Department of Defense, and the Fish & Wildlife Service. EEI is aware of the tremendous effort and time spent to designate the energy corridors designated in the Draft PEIS. It has not been an easy task, but

it is one that is necessary to deliver reliable energy to consumers in the eleven western states. Given the predominance of federal land ownership in the West, the federal land agencies must be a partner in helping to meet the energy infrastructure needs of the region. Congress recognized this need in Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

We strongly recommend that the agencies include a robust discussion of the congestion and reliability concerns within the western grid under the section discussing the purpose and need for the 368 corridors. While the agencies are required to make 368 corridor designations under EAct05, Congress fully understood the vulnerabilities in the Western grid and intended these corridors to help address those and that should be more robustly outlined in the document.

EEL expressed support for the agencies work to implement EAct section 368 during the scoping process in the fall of 2005 and in response to the initial map showing potential corridors in July 2006. EEL remains committed to the designation of energy corridors on federal lands in the western states. We feel the West-wide regional approach taken is the most efficient way to address the need for energy corridors from an energy, environmental, and land management perspective.

EEL's comments today are general in nature. We will not comment on specific corridors included, or excluded, in the Draft PEIS. However, we do encourage the federal agencies preparing the PEIS to include additional corridors and

modifications to proposed corridors as identified by EEI members and other utilities that will rely on the corridors. Those utilities know where additional energy facilities are most likely to have to be located in the future to deliver energy from source to load.

We also encourage the agencies preparing the PEIS to recognize the important transmission siting provisions that Congress included in section 1221 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 as the agencies implement section 368. Under section 1221, for example, the Department of Energy is responsible for designating "national interest corridors" where transmission congestion is serious and needs to be addressed. The section 1221 corridors will encompass both federal and non-federal lands, and the section 368 designations should take the section 1221 designations into account. Further, under section 1221 the Department of Energy is responsible to act as a lead agency for overall federal permitting of electric transmission facilities, in the interest of streamlining the permitting process. The agencies should use this lead agency process to streamline authorizations for use of federal lands, including the section 368 corridors.

The Draft PEIS indicates that a total of 6,055 miles of corridors have been proposed for designation. Roughly 62% of the proposed corridors would incorporate existing corridors and rights-of-way. EEI commends the federal agencies for avoiding sensitive areas such as national parks, wilderness areas,

tribal lands, national monuments, and national recreational areas. While 6,055 miles of corridors is significant, they are not adequate to meet the needs in the western states for new transmission to reliably serve load centers. The identified corridors are not sufficient to bring renewable, clean coal, and other types of electric power generation from source to end users. EEI strongly urges the PEIS interagency team to include in the Final PEIS the corridors individual utilities recommended be designated during the scoping process and since then. The recommended corridors will be critical for relieving congestion, improving reliability, and meeting demand for additional electricity from a west-wide perspective. Additional corridors can be designated without intruding on sensitive lands.

The Draft PEIS specifies a maximum width of 3,500 feet for the proposed energy corridors. At first glance this might seem wide enough to accommodate multiple energy rights-of-way. However, in EEI's July 10, 2006 written comments on the preliminary draft energy corridor map, we stated that corridors must be wide enough to guarantee safe and reliable operation of multiple facilities. In reviewing the Draft PEIS, EEI member companies have expressed concern that the proposed 3,500 foot maximum width is suboptimal from a reliability perspective and not wide enough to accommodate multiple facilities in general and transmission lines in particular. This proposed maximum width in many cases will be insufficient to enable future location of facilities and rights-of-way in a manner that is most efficient, most compatible with local topography, and

minimizes environmental effects. We would propose a one-mile standard width and the option for utilities to request a wider corridor as necessary to address these concerns.

The purpose of the programmatic EIS approach is to expedite the processing of actual energy project rights-of-way within the designated corridors. We believe the federal agencies concur with this. However, EEI member companies have expressed concern that the Draft PEIS does not clearly delineate how projects proposed to be sited within the designated corridors actually will be expedited compared to the current process. If benefits for siting within a corridor do not result in actual cost and time savings, there will be little incentive for full utilization of the designated corridors.

The Draft PEIS makes references to potential impacts of electric and magnetic fields (EMF) from transmission lines on wildlife, in particular avian species. The body of evidence from scientific studies does not support a conclusion of adverse impacts on wildlife from exposure to EMF. The Draft PEIS statements on EMF impacts on wildlife are misleading at best and should not be included in the Final PEIS.

The Draft PEIS also recommends "transmission lines should be designed and constructed in conformance with the *Avian Protection Plan Guidelines* produced

by the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC) and the US Fish and Wildlife Service in 2005. As a point of clarification, the APP Guidelines do not contain specific line design criteria and are intended to be used in conjunction with *Suggested Practices for Avian Protection on Power Lines: The State of the Art in 2006*, jointly prepared by the Edison Electric Institute, APLIC and the California Energy Commission. The correct cited document should be included and reference to the APP Guidelines as a mitigation measure removed.

The Draft PEIS identifies a number of potential environmental effects that might result from siting facilities in the corridors. On the one hand, the Draft PEIS can perform a useful function by narrowing the range of potential effects so those constitute the outside bound of what might have to be studied further in siting a given facility. On the other hand, the PEIS needs to make abundantly clear that a given facility typically will raise only a subset of such potential effects and only some of those may require further study.

In conclusion, EEI and its member companies are very supportive of the Draft PEIS, and we recommend the changes I have just discussed as ways to improve the document. We hope that you will give serious consideration to our comments in preparing the Final PEIS. EEI will submit detailed written comments by the February 14, 2008 deadline.

Thank you very much.

Comments to Public Hearing on the West Wide Energy Corridor Draft Programmatic  
Environmental Impact Statement  
February 5, 2008

I am Donna Smith, a resident of the District of Columbia.

To celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Wilderness Act in 1989, a group of wilderness supporters formed a non-profit grassroots advocacy organization based on the voices and activism of elders to protect and preserve wilderness and wild lands -- the Great Old Broads for Wilderness.

Today, there are Broads of all ages and both genders in every state working to protect America's last wild places.

As a Board Member of this organization, I am here to comment on the Departments of Energy, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, and Defense Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement [Draft PEIS] for the West Wide Energy Corridor.

There are three main points:

1) This plan proposes to designate 6,000 miles of these corridors through public land in eleven western states with one unified prescription for placement of multiple energy transmission and pipelines -- with an average width of 3,500 feet (2/3 of a mile, roughly the distance between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument). A one-size-fits-all plan does not address the widely varied geology, habitat, and native archaeological rarities of the West as individual treasures.

That the Draft PEIS does limit the width of the corridor in the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico along the Rio Grande River to 1500 feet demonstrates that you recognize the critical importance of aligning routes carefully through sensitive areas, but that attention must be extended to all such areas.

2) Development of the proposed areas must be in compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act [NHPA] and the Endangered Species Act [ESA]. Archaeological treasures such as Native American ruins, petroglyphs, and pictographs must be considered and preserved even if a straight-line corridor following a single, existing transmission line is more convenient.

Habitat and wildlife corridors are not fungible with alternative land tracts, no matter how similar they may appear to be. For example, coastal sage scrub may appear to be a single habitat, but it may cover a hilly range with elevations from sea level to two thousand feet. Yet, a particular bird may only dwell between 500 and 1000 feet. So, if a two-thirds mile-wide swath of public land at this elevation, extending perhaps dozens of miles, is dedicated

to the installation of a variety of pipelines for a variety of purposes, this bird species' entire habitat may be effectively destroyed.

Likewise, a single grizzly bear requires over 450 acres of land as its territory, but a two-thirds mile-wide corridor across its range -- committed to eventual uses for oil, gas, or hydrogen pipelines, electricity transmission lines, and related infrastructure, such as access and maintenance roads, compressors, pumping stations, and other structures -- may completely bifurcate and thus destroy its homeland.

3) While energy corridors may be needed, their installation on public lands must be considered when they are needed on a case-by-case basis with a comparative evaluation of other uses of these public lands. We must ask

- are new pipelines or power lines actually needed now;
- are federal lands the necessary and only locations;
- are sensitive public lands avoided;
- are projects subjected to best management practices in order to limit damage to other resources, recreation, and vistas;
- are risks to federal and other affected lands thoroughly assessed and minimized;
- is consideration also given to improving access for renewable energy, such as wind and solar.

This land is not your land or my land; it is our land -- to be prudently preserved in trust for our children's grandchildren to experience and love as we do.

On behalf of the Great Old Broads for Wilderness, thank you.