



THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY

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Colorado and Utah's Public Lands Threatened by Proposed Energy Corridors

-- Public Meetings Scheduled for January 15 in Grand Junction, CO and January 17 in Salt Lake City, UT

Denver, Colorado—Utah's Arches National Park, Glen Canyon National Recreation Area, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument could soon be home to gas, oil and hydrogen pipelines and electric transmission facilities if the Department of Energy's plan to designate energy corridors through public land in 11 Western states moves ahead. In Colorado, the Continental Divide and Old Spanish trails, Curecanti National Recreation Area and five areas proposed for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System face impacts. Proposed corridors also would be located near Vaszquez Peak Wilderness in Colorado, and numerous Wilderness Study Areas and proposed wilderness lands in both Colorado and Utah.

“Although the Energy Department has made significant improvements in their proposed corridor designations, the proposed corridors still lack thorough consideration of the likely damage to federal lands and other places,” said The Wilderness Society's Nada Culver, who has tracked the process since it began. “The proposal would have stark impacts for Colorado and Utah's special places. Here and elsewhere, the Energy Department needs to come up with alternatives to minimize the number of corridors and maximize use of renewable energy, and it should include firm requirements to limit all projects to designated corridors.”

The U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Energy, and Interior are conducting a series of public meetings in January and February on the West-wide Energy Corridor Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS). Four meetings have already occurred in Portland, Seattle, Sacramento and Ontario, CA and next Tuesday and Thursday's meeting (January 15 and January 17) will take place at the Marriott Courtyard in Grand Junction and the Airport Hilton Hotel in Salt Lake City, respectively.

“These corridors are proposed in lands that people from around the world appreciate for their scenic beauty and unspoiled vistas, including lands adjacent to Arches National Park,” said Liz Thomas with the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance in Moab, UT. “The proposed energy corridors in Utah would cross remote sandstone canyons, high plateaus

and mesas, streams and wildlife habitat – places that are inappropriate for this type of industrial development.”

The November 2007 PEIS was issued by the Departments of Energy, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, and Defense as outlined in the Energy Policy Act of 2005. The plan proposes more than 6,000 miles of energy corridors through public land in California, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming. Unless otherwise specified, the corridors would have a width of 3,500 feet (2/3 mile).

The agencies’ west-wide proposed plan threatens to carve huge habitat-fragmenting corridors through millions of acres of public land, including national recreation areas, monuments, wildlife refuges, and more. The corridors are planned to “accommodate multiple pipelines (such as for oil, gas, or hydrogen), electricity transmission lines, and related infrastructure, such as access and maintenance roads, compressors, pumping stations, and other structures.” Once these corridors are designated, energy companies will then push to “connect the dots” between far-flung segments of public land over thousands of miles of private and state lands, such as state parks and wildlife areas.

“This proposal threatens to undermine years of conservation efforts to protect wild places throughout the state,” Suzanne Jones, regional director for The Wilderness Society’s Central Rockies Office, said. “The draft plan fails to provide conservation guidelines or exclude treasured public landscapes such as Colorado’s Curecanti National Recreation Area, Utah’s Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and Arches National Park, as well as countless proposed wilderness areas and roadless forest lands in both states.”

Colorado:

Public Meeting

Utah:

Public Meeting

When:

January 15 at 2-5 p.m. and 6-8 p.m.

January 17 at 2-5 p.m. and 6-8 p.m.

Where:

Marriott Courtyard
765 Horizon Drive
Grand Junction, CO

Airport Hilton Hotel
5151 Wiley Post Road
Salt Lake City, UT

Find more information on the West-wide Energy Corridor PEIS at:

<http://corridoreis.anl.gov> and on impacted areas across the West at:

<http://www.wilderness.org/OurIssues/BLM/ActionCenter/Westwide.cfm?TopLevel=BLMAActionCenter>

Additional state maps can be found at: <http://corridoreis.anl.gov/eis/dmap/sbm/index.cfm>