



WESTERN RESOURCE
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For Immediate Release

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West-Wide Energy Corridors Plan:
Positive Transmission Corridors Mix with Others in Need of Revision

Boulder, CO – Today, the Departments of Energy, Interior and Agriculture released the West-Wide Energy Corridors Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (FPEIS) study, designating over 6,000 linear miles of energy corridors for future pipelines and power lines on public lands in 11 western states. Several, but not all, of the proposed energy corridors meet Western Resource Advocates’ “Smart Lines” criteria as projects beneficial for capturing renewable energy production.

Tom Darin, Western Resource Advocates Energy Transmission Attorney, stated, “With certain preconditions, several of these corridors will help the West transition to a new energy economy based on clean, renewable energy.”

Western Resource Advocates has been working with renewable energy industries, transmission engineers and environmental groups to design a transmission system to deliver over 11,000 megawatts of geothermal, wind and solar resources produced in Nevada. “Corridors designated in Nevada, a state that is 85% public land, could potentially integrate these renewable resources,” said Darin. “These corridors could help link enough green electricity to power over 3 million homes -- without significant lands impacts. Other corridors may help accelerate linking Arizona, Wyoming and New Mexico wind and solar resources to major western population centers.”

In 2008, Western Resource Advocates developed its [Smart Lines transmission planning criteria](#) to help guide energy corridor design efforts and provide guidance for Congressional oversight of the process. Smart Lines establishes that comprehensive transmission planning can be a platform for a sustainable energy policy by:

- maximizing efficient energy use at populations centers and reducing overall transmission demands;
- upgrading existing power lines to transfer more power;
- interconnecting clean, renewable energy resources; and
- protecting western landscapes and wildlife.

The incoming Obama administration has already proposed a comprehensive national energy plan that calls for increased use of renewable energy, renewable energy portfolio standards for utilities and an improved electrical grid to transmit these new, cleaner forms of energy. While several of the proposed West-Wide Energy Corridors will meet the Obama objectives, others must be re-evaluated to bring them into compliance with the nation's energy goals.

While some of the proposed energy corridors may play a positive role in the West's renewable energy future, major problems remain. "The agencies failed to limit new power lines to serving only renewable energy projects and not just more conventional coal plants," added Darin. "Since many of these transmission projects will cross public lands, we need to make sure these public lands are used for the public good. Enabling high-levels of new CO₂ emissions is not consistent with the public's view of a new energy policy for the 21st century."

Additionally, the federal agencies failed to analyze to what extent some of the 50,000 miles of existing high-voltage transmission lines in the West could be upgraded to carry more power, precluding the need to develop some of the proposed corridors.

Other problems include unacceptable impacts to iconic western landscapes. "Corridors negatively impacting Arches National Park, Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument and important wildlife habitat need to be re-examined and possibly eliminated," said Darin, adding, "At the end of the day, we need to accept that new power lines for renewable energy will have impacts but need to be sited somewhere – our goal is to direct renewable energy projects and transmission to environmentally preferred locations."

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Western Resource Advocates is a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to protecting the West's land, air, and water. Visit us online at www.westernresourceadvocates.org.