Western Area Power Administration Transmission Line Management Reauthorization

How to Provide Comments:

Please complete a comment form and place it in the comment box or give it to a meeting representative at the scoping meeting. Comments can also be sent to the following address and must be postmarked by May 26, 2010:

Jim Hartman, Environmental Manager
Western Area Power Administration
P.O. Box 3700
Loveland, CO 80539-3003
Email: Western-FS-EIS@wapa.gov

Please note that by including your name and address on correspondence, you agree the information may be made public as part of the EIS process.

Your involvement and input on the proposed action, alternatives to the proposed action, and environmental impacts will help Western and the FS determine what to address in the EIS.

Making Effective Comments:

Effective comments help ensure important issues are identified and addressed in the EIS.

- State specific concerns instead of making broad statements.
- Focus your comments on specific issues and provide supporting information.
- Identify important environmental and community concerns.

For more information, please visit the project website at:
www.wapa.gov/transmission/Western-fs-EIS.htm

Western Area Power Administration Ault-Craig Line.

Project Timeline

April 8, 2010
Notice of Intent Published in Federal Register

April 22, 2010
Public Scoping Meeting
Denver, Colorado

April 23, 2010
Public Scoping Meeting
Grand Junction, Colorado

April 26, 2010
Public Scoping Meeting
Vernal, Utah

May 26, 2010
Close of the Public Scoping Period

Spring/Summer 2010
Preparation of Draft EIS

Summer 2010
Notice of Availability of Draft EIS

Summer/Fall 2010
45-Day Public Comment Period & Hearings

Fall/Winter 2010
Preparation of Final EIS

Spring 2011
Notice of Availability of Final EIS/ Record of Decision

Welcome!

Western Area Power Administration (Western) and the U.S. Forest Service (FS) are jointly preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the continued management of Western's existing transmission lines on FS lands in Colorado, Utah, and Nebraska. Western proposes to continue maintaining these lines and is proposing to change the way it manages vegetation on the existing rights-of-way (ROW). The changes would require updated or new authorizations from the FS.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to consider the following when making a decision that could significantly affect the environment:

- Alternatives to the proposed action.
- Environmental impacts.
- Information from the public, agencies, and tribes.

The EIS will integrate other environmental review and consultation such as section 7 of the Endangered Species Act and section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Scoping is part of the NEPA review process. Western and the FS are conducting three scoping meetings to provide an opportunity for you to learn more about the project, provide comments, and identify potential issues to be analyzed in the EIS.

Vegetation regeneration in the ROW.

The proposed methods for maintaining vegetation in the ROW include:
- **Mechanical treatments**
- **Use of herbicides**
- **Hand treatments**

ABOVE: ROW after vegetation treatment.
BELOW: ROW vegetation regeneration during the first growing season after treatment.

The proposed action includes maintenance activities typical of electrical industry practices for maintaining ROW, access, structures, and other equipment. To comply with changed industry regulations and standards, Western proposes to modify its overall approach to ROW vegetation management. Western's improved vegetation management along ROWs on National Forest System lands would include:

- Changing from a focus on danger tree cutting to an active management approach that ensures vegetation does not become a risk to the transmission lines.
- Reducing the amount of wildfire fuel on the ROW including the debris from years of danger tree cutting.
- Implementing and maintaining vegetation conditions along the ROW that focus on establishing stable native vegetation that reduces risk to transmission lines.

The public scoping comment period ends on May 26, 2010.

Project Objectives

- Ensure Western's capability to maintain the transmission lines to ensure safety and the reliability of the transmission system.
- Ensure sufficient access for maintenance.
- Ensure public and worker safety.
- Manage vegetation to comply with current industry and mandatory reliability standards.
- Enhance the ability of the facilities to survive wildfires.
- Protect sensitive environmental resources including cultural resources, special status biological resources, water quality, sensitive visual resources, and others.
- Control maintenance costs and improve efficiency.
- Reduce the risk that fires would be started by transmission lines.

What are Design Features?

Design features are part of the proposed action and define how the proposal will be implemented. Design features are intended to avoid or minimize impacts.

The transmission lines cross approximately 280 miles of National Forest System lands in Colorado, Utah, and Nebraska.

How are They Used?

Design features are used during project implementation and may be site-specific or broader in scope.

A SITE-SPECIFIC DESIGN FEATURE USED TO PROTECT SENSITIVE WILDLIFE:
Prohibit activity within ¼ mile of an active raptor nest during nesting season.

A BROADER SCOPE DESIGN FEATURE USED TO REDUCE THE RISK OF WILDFIRE:
Require spark arrestors be installed on all chainsaws.

Design Feature Examples:

TO MINIMIZE IMPACTS TO PUBLIC AND PERMITTED RECREATIONAL USERS:
Western would coordinate temporary closures of trail heads, administrative sites, campgrounds, and travel corridors with the local Ranger Districts.

TO PROTECT SOILS, WATERSHEDS, AND WATER QUALITY:
Heavy equipment would not be used on the ROW when soils are too wet.

TO PROTECT RIPARIAN AREAS, AQUATIC RESOURCES, AND WATER QUALITY:
Equipment staging areas and refueling locations will be located at least 250 feet away from streams and wetlands.

TO PROTECT AIR QUALITY:
Equipment and vehicles that show excessive emissions of exhaust gases due to poor engine adjustments, or other inefficient operating conditions, shall not be operated until corrective repairs or adjustments are made.