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Energy Corridors Designated in Eleven Western States

The Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today signed a Record of Decision (ROD) amending 92 land use plans in support of the designation of more than 6,000 miles of energy transport corridors on Federal lands in 11 Western States.

The decision is based on analyses presented in the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) released on November 28, 2008, by the BLM and the U.S. Departments of Energy, Agriculture, and Defense as part of their work to implement Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. The PEIS identifies energy corridors to facilitate future siting of oil, gas, and hydrogen pipelines, as well as renewable energy development projects and electricity transmission and distribution facilities on Federal lands in the West to meet the region's increasing energy demands while mitigating potential harmful effects to the environment.

"The designation of these corridors represents a significant step in addressing some of the critical energy infrastructure issues in the West," said BLM Director James Caswell. "The cooperative efforts of the involved agencies to establish pathways for future pipelines and long-distance electrical transmission lines will help relieve congestion, improve reliability, and enhance the national electric grid."

Energy transport corridors are agency-preferred locations where pipelines and transmission lines may be sited and built in the future. Future use of the corridors should reduce the proliferation of rights-of-way across the landscape and minimize the environmental footprint from development. The corridors were sited through the PEIS using a four-step process that identified a number of important lands and resources to be avoided to the fullest extent possible. The agencies examined factors that constrain where a network of energy transport corridors could be located – including topographical, environmental, and regulatory constraints – as well as the overall suitability of particular lands to support development and operation of energy transport infrastructure. In some cases, corridors intersect or approach sensitive lands or resources. Most often these intersections follow existing infrastructure such as highways, transmission lines, or pipelines to avoid placing corridors in new locations.

Eighty-two percent of the corridors, approximately 5,000 miles, are located on BLM-managed lands, while 16 percent are on USDA Forest Service lands. The remaining corridor segments are on lands managed by Interior's Bureau of Reclamation and National Park Service, or by the Department of Defense.

Prepared under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act, the PEIS develops and evaluates a number of interagency operating procedures that will help ensure that energy transport projects within Section 368 energy corridors are planned, implemented, and operated in a manner that protects and enhances environmental resources. The ROD adopts these procedures and related mitigation measures, and serves as a formal record of the Department of the Interior's decision to amend relevant BLM land use plans and to incorporate Section 368 corridors therein. Individual projects proposed for these corridors will undergo further, project-specific environmental analysis before being granted permits or rights-of-way.

The ROD documents extensive public involvement in the preparation of the PEIS. Efforts to reach stakeholders and constituents began in 2005, and included formal notices, scoping and public meetings, preliminary maps, a 90-day comment period on the draft PEIS, and a comprehensive project website.

To review the ROD and related documents, including detailed maps, visit the project website at <http://corridoreis.anl.gov>. Review copies are also available at libraries and agency regional and field offices.

The BLM manages more land – 256 million acres – than any other Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western States, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands.

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