

102705 scoping afternoon.txt

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**TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING
FEDERAL ENERGY CORRIDOR DESIGNATION**

**Thursday, 2:10 p.m.
October 27, 2005
Little America Inn
Cheyenne, Wyoming**

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P R O C E E D I N G S
(Public scoping meeting proceedings

8 have another session for those that may not have been able
9 to attend in the afternoon. So does anybody want to make a
10 comment before we go off the record?

11 Okay. very good. Thank you very much.

12 (Public scoping meeting proceedings
13 recessed 3:33 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.)

14 MR. MOLVAR: I'm Erik Molvar, E-R-I-K
15 M-O-L-V-A-R, with Biodiversity Conservation Alliance in
16 Laramie. And I'd like to open by saying that -- that
17 particularly with pipeline corridors, that we'd like to see
18 the DOE putting the pipelines along existing pipeline
19 corridors that are already there and there are a number of
20 them throughout the state that would seem to get you from
21 the areas of gas production to the areas of the important
22 hubs of transmission, the opal hub and the Cheyenne hub.

23 Don't see any need to further fragment the
24 habitat by putting pipelines along pristine areas, but
25 would like to see the pipelines that go in, go in along

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1 existing corridors. There are some issues where the
2 industry would like to have more capacity for pipelines,
3 but there's no reason to have more different routings going
4 in different directions, necessarily, to achieve that.
5 It's much better to bundle these pipelines in the same
6 corridors. And also in corridors that are also other kinds
7 of travel corridors, such as highway corridors,
8 particularly Interstate 80 in the Red Desert, which is in
9 the south central part of the state, that's an area of
10 paramount conservation concern, so there particularly we'd
11 like to see the pipelines go along highways and

12 interstates.

13 There is an existing pipeline corridor that goes
14 between the Pion's Basin in Colorado and Wamsutter, there's
15 a -- Entegris is building a line that is going on top of an
16 existing line, and so is El Paso, I believe. We don't
17 agree that's a good siting for these pipelines. And they
18 should have been built along Highway 789, which is farther
19 east, to take advantage of the area that's already
20 disturbed along the Muddy Creek corridor. And for future
21 pipeline and power line use, we'd like to see that those go
22 along the highway instead of along the kind of
23 cross-country pipeline corridor that's been built through
24 the canyons of Sand Creek, because the canyons of Sand
25 Creek are of high visual resource value and of, you know,

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1 high interest to the public for recreation, would not like
2 to see those pipeline corridors go through that area.

3 Also, in terms of weeds, noxious weeds, we're
4 really concerned about noxious weeds coming in along
5 pipeline corridors. We recognize that -- that the federal
6 agencies typically require the operators to disced
7 these areas with native seeds, but nonetheless it seems
8 that pipeline corridors are heavy invasive noxious weed
9 colonization areas in the wake of construction. And as
10 nearly as we can tell, it's hard to tell whether this is --
11 this is due to the fact that heavy equipment is bringing in
12 noxious weed seeds because it's not been washed and
13 encrusted with mud that drops off and forms a colonization
14 base, or if it's just the fact that when you create -- when
15 you scarify the land and create a reset of the succession
16 to the most basic bare dirt level, that the noxious weeds

17 just have a fundamental intrinsic advantage over the native
18 vegetation in terms of colonizing.

19 some of the species that we've seen, had major
20 problems with Red Desert area Halogeton -- you know how to
21 spell that -- and cheat grass. And, of course, in the Red
22 Desert we don't have a huge cheat grass problem yet, and we
23 used to think that it was simply too high in elevation and
24 cheat grass didn't thrive there, but recently along some
25 highway corridors we have been seeing that cheat grass

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1 invasion is occurring, and we're very concerned, because
2 the sage grouse or sagebrush ecosystems that are found in
3 the upper Green River Valley and the Red Desert, in
4 particular, are some of the most outstanding sagebrush
5 ecosystems remaining in the west, with full complement of
6 native sagebrush obligate types of wildlife.

7 And out in Nevada, where -- where they've had a
8 lot of cheat grass invasion, they've had a cycle of
9 overgrazing and cheat grass invasion and frequent wild
10 fires that pretty much wiped out sagebrush ecosystem in
11 large parts of Nevada, and really degraded those ecosystems
12 and threatened species like the sage grouse, burrowing owl,
13 some of the other rare native wildlife that's indigenous to
14 the sagebrush step. And we don't want to see that happen
15 in Wyoming, so we don't want to see pipelines becoming the
16 beachhead for cheat grass invasion or other noxious weed
17 invasion that spreads into surrounding undisturbed areas.

18 In terms of overhead power transmission lines,
19 I've never met an overhead power transmission line I liked.
20 we'd like to see trans -- electricity transmission go

21 underground. we would like to see innovative solutions to
22 the -- the transmission problems with putting lines
23 underground so that we can, you know, make sure that
24 transmission lines go underground. The overhead power
25 transmission lines, you know, are not just a problem

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1 visually. Of course nobody likes to look at them, because
2 they are quite a visual intrusion, but it's -- it's also a
3 question of -- of forming a focal point for raptor roosting
4 or raptor nesting sometimes.

5 The U.S. fish & wildlife Service has recommended
6 tall structures in order of wind turbines and -- and power
7 transmission towers not be built within five miles of a
8 sage grouse lek, because apparently sage grouse
9 behaviorally tend to abandon their leks if there are tall
10 things around, whether that's a tree or power line.
11 Typically in the basin of Wyoming you don't have too much
12 problems with trees, but power lines can be an issue and we
13 want to make sure that the EIS looks at where active and
14 historic sage grouse leks are located and make sure that
15 we're not building these overhead transmission towers
16 within five miles of sage grouse leks.

17 of course, there are numerous proposed wilderness
18 areas scattered throughout the west, and wilderness areas
19 as well. Quality of the wilderness recreational experience
20 is dependent upon having a pristine landscape to view,
21 either -- you know, both while you're in it, but also the
22 viewshed when you're looking out from it. And so you
23 wouldn't want to put overhead power line transmissions in
24 or near a citizen's proposed wilderness of any kind and you
25 want to keep it well out of the viewshed of spectacular

1 landscapes. There certainly are some important ones, Adobe
2 Town in the Jack Morrow Hills area of Wyoming are
3 particularly of high value. Those are really hot button
4 areas and you definitely wouldn't want to put power lines
5 anywhere near those areas.

6 And, of course, if you bury the power lines, then
7 you've alleviated a lot of the visual intrusions and also
8 the impacts of sage grouse from my different aspects. we'd
9 rather see those power lines be buried.

10 You know, really that's basically what I had to
11 say.

12 MR. CUNNINGHAM: Thank you very much.

13 MR. MOLVAR: sure.

14 MR. CUNNINGHAM: Very thoughtful comments,
15 and I know it's tough sometimes to travel all this way and
16 everything.

17 very good. okay. we'll go ahead -- ■ don't
18 think there's anyone else, and we'll go ahead and close out
19 the session here at 5:35 -- 4:35 p.m.

20 (Public scoping meeting proceedings
21 concluded 4:35 p.m., October 27, 2005.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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