

**Public Hearing on
Energy Policy Act—Section 368
Energy Corridors in the West:
Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement**

Grand Junction, Colorado, January 15, 2008, 2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

LaVerne Kyriss: So good afternoon to everyone who is here. I want to thank you for joining us for a public hearing on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement on Designating Energy Corridors on Federal Lands in the West. I'm LaVerne Kyriss from the Department of Energy. I'll serve as today's hearing officer.

Before we begin the formal hearing, Duane Spencer, who is the acting BLM Deputy State Director—Energy Lands and Minerals, will make a brief opening statement. But, first, if you have not signed in, or you haven't let us know that you would like to speak at this meeting, you can do so right now at the registration table that's just out in the hotel lobby.

Handout materials—and we have an energy corridor fact sheet, and we have this little map handout out there for you as well. Restrooms are located down the hall past the registration desk in the lobby.

In the event of a fire or other alarm, we'd ask you to please take your personal belongings and evacuate the building as quickly, quietly, and safely as possible, and I believe our nearest exit is to the right this way and then the main entrance is that way.

With us today representing the Federal Interagency Team managing this work are Kate Winthrop from Bureau of Land Management, and Glen Parker from Forest Service. After we are finished taking your comments, we'll stay around to informally discuss the Draft PEIS with you.

Now I'm going to turn the mike over to Duane.

Duane Spencer: Good afternoon, everyone. I would like to thank you all for coming out to give your comments on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the Designation of Energy Transport Corridors on Federal Lands in the West. As she said earlier, I'm Duane Spencer. I'm with the BLM Colorado. I'm the acting Deputy State Director of Energy Lands and Minerals.

In just a few moments, we'll hear a brief presentation about the document, which the Departments of Interior, Energy, and Agriculture are preparing to meet requirements of the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

Currently—as background—currently, applications for right-of-ways to cross federal lands with pipelines or electrical transmission infrastructure are considered on a case-by-case basis without much coordination among the federal agencies whose lands are often involved in projects that transport energy across long distances. In 2005, Congress directed federal agencies to address this situation by designating energy transport corridors and also performing necessary reviews of the environmental impacts of designation. A Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement developed under the National Environmental Policy Act represents the environmental review. It is important to note that another round of site-specific National Environmental Policy Act analysis will be completed for each project proposed for location in a designated corridor.

The Department of Energy, the Bureau of Land Management, and the U.S. Forest Service developed the corridor locations proposed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement using a three-step process, which is detailed in the document in a handout available on the information table and which the presentation will also describe.

In essence, today's hearing represents a fourth step in this process. Public comments will help the agencies further refine the locations of corridors so the important goals of the project are met, balancing the needs to improve energy delivery in the West with our responsibility to protect the many resources found on federal lands.

From the beginning, the agencies have been committed to this strategy, and your comments will be valuable in helping to ensure that it is carried through to the end of this planning effort. As we noted earlier, representatives from the Department of Energy, BLM, and the Forest Service are here to receive your comments, and behalf of those three agencies, thank you for your interest and participation, and we will be around afterwards to talk informally. Thank you.

LaVerne Kyriess: We are here today to receive your oral comments on the Draft PEIS. You can also submit comments via the project website, by fax, or by mail. This hearing is being webcast and transcribed, so the speakers are asked to speak clearly and distinctly into the microphone. If you are having trouble hearing a speaker in the room, please signal me, and I will advise the speaker accordingly. After everyone who wishes to comment has spoken, I'll close the hearing.

So far, we have about four people who have requested to speak to this issue today. Each of you will have an initial five minutes to make your presentation. When you have 30 seconds remaining, I'll notify you so you can begin to wrap up.

This hearing is to take comments on a Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement in response to direction given by Congress to five federal agencies—Energy, Agriculture, Interior, Commerce, and Defense. Section 368 directs the secretary to designate corridors for oil, gas, hydrogen, pipeline, and electric transmission lines on federal lands in the 11 Western states to perform the necessary environmental review. Partly because of this requirement, we've decided to prepare the Draft PEIS that is the subject of this hearing, and to incorporate these designations into land use, land management, or equivalent plans. A separate and distinct public process is expected to begin later this year to identify corridors in the other 39 states.

The statute requires that when the secretaries designate these corridors, they must specify the corridor centerline, the corridor width, and the corridor compatible uses. Congress also directed the secretaries to take into account the need for electric transmission facilities to improve reliability, relieve congestion, and enhance the capacity of the national grid to deliver electricity.

The Draft PEIS proposes designating more than 6,000 miles of corridors. Sixty-two percent would incorporate existing locally designated corridors and/or rights-of-way; 86 percent would be on BLM land; and 11 percent on Forest Service land. The Draft PEIS identifies 166 proposed corridor segments in all 11 Western states. If all are included in the follow-on decisions, this would involve amending 165 land use or equivalent plans.

Previously designated corridors are outlined in yellow on the project map. Some of these are proposed for upgrade only. In the case of existing previously designated utility corridors, amendments to land use plans designating them as 368 corridors would subject these corridors to the interagency coordination processes described in the PEIS, and they would be assigned Section 368 criteria—in effect, the centerline, width, and compatible purposes.

Using existing corridors alone would not meet the requirements of Section 368, so we've identified an additional 2,300 miles of proposed corridors. Proposed corridors also vary in width. We used a 3,500-foot starting point to provide flexibility for siting multiple rights-of-way.

An energy corridor is defined as a parcel of land identified through a land-use planning process as a preferred location for existing and future utility rights-of-way and that is suitable to accommodate one or more rights-of-way, which are similar, identical, or compatible. Corridor designations assist in minimizing adverse impacts and the proliferation of separate rights-of-way.

A right-of-way is a specific land-use authorization, not a change in ownership, granted to allow construction and operation of a specific project that's often linear in character, such as a utility line or a roadway.

Right-of-way permits include requirements for compatible land uses and are not granted until the project applicant has complied with all relevant requirements including appropriate environmental review.

In November 2007, we published a Draft PEIS. Comments are due February 14. We will analyze and respond to the comments and complete the tasks necessary to prepare a final EIS. We expect to have this ready some time in mid-2008. The land management agencies will then be able to sign Records of Decision to designate corridors through amendments to land-use plans no sooner than 30 days after the final PEIS is issued.

The Draft PEIS analyzes two alternatives—taking No Action and the Proposed Action. Choosing to adopt the No Action alternative would continue—would result in continuing ad hoc uncoordinated development as is done now. The Proposed Action is the result of a three-step corridor siting process described in detail in Chapter 2 of the Draft PEIS.

The first step was to incorporate comments provided by the public during scoping and after the draft map was released in 2006. Then the agencies worked closely with local federal land managers to accommodate local land-use priorities, incorporate local knowledge of areas, and avoid areas known to be incompatible with potential future development.

A handout summarizing this process for determining where the proposed corridors would be located is on the information table. We also have examples of specific corridors on our project website. We believe that the analysis of these alternatives meet this requirement for a hard look. Because the Proposed Action does not involve any site-specific, ground-disturbing activities, site-specific need for review will be required to support all proposed projects within a 368-designated corridor.

And today we don't know when and where any projects will be proposed by applicants seeking to site pipelines and/or transmission lines. As a result of this uncertainty, the environmental effect described in Chapter 3 of the Draft PEIS are necessarily more general than a site-specific analysis for a known project would be.

Comments will be most useful if they are specific, they include suggested changes or methodologies, provide a rationale for your suggestion, and refer to the specific section or page number of the Draft PEIS.

Finally, we encourage you to submit comments via the project website. It's easy for you. It speeds our ability to get comments into the database for analysis and up on the website for public review and doesn't require stamps or envelopes.

I'll call speakers in the order in which you registered. We would ask you to please step up to the microphone and clearly state your name and your organization, if you're representing one, before you make your comments. Please limit your oral comments to five minutes so that everyone who wants to speak today may have a chance to be heard. I'll advise you when you have 30 seconds left so you can wrap up. I have this nice little sign.

I will then ask if anyone else wants to speak. After those people have had a chance to speak, we'll go back to the people who spoke first, and if they want to talk again, we will do that. After everyone has had a chance to speak, we'll then close the hearing and remind you when comments are due and how to submit them.

If you are speaking from a prepared statement, we would ask you to leave a copy with us at the registration desk. If you are not prepared to do that today, we'd ask you to send it to us via the project website.

While agency representatives won't be answering questions during the hearing, we will stay afterwards to discuss the Draft PEIS with you. If we need to, we'll take a 15-minute break midway through our scheduled time.

Are there any questions on how we're going to conduct the hearing today? I see a few headshakes no. So if there are no questions on the process we use today, we will now begin to take your comments.

Our first speaker will be Carter Mathies followed by Alex Dane. So, Carter—

Carter Mathies: Thank you, LaVerne, and good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I think I'm already in violation of what you intended here. I pre-registered because I had some questions, not necessarily comments, but I'll go quickly and try not to use my five minutes up.

I am with a company—my company is called Arista Midstream Services. We are an intermediary in the natural gas business between pipelines and the producer. We build low-pressure gathering, and so we are a leg of the process.

These large corridors, it's unclear to me—and my first question is, is it contemplated that private industry and/or unregulated businesses would have equal access to the corridors? And by that I mean non-jurisdictional pipelines and things such as—that would be FERC, for instance, FERC-authorized. That's the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. It is not clear from the documentation and the materials that I've reviewed what FERC's role will be in approving projects that would be deemed to be in the best interest of the general public, and that leads me to a concern I'd like to express, that the corridors could have an unintended effect of creating monopoly opportunities for the first in—first power line, first pipeline, things like that.

And here's the basis for my concern. If it's intended that you have a NEPA full review and environmental statement—impact statement for due process for each and every project, it's my own personal experience, 30 years in the Rockies, has been from a slightly frustrating standpoint. If you are following an prior project in the general area, even to the extent you're sharing pre-existing right-of-way corridors, you almost always are focused on utilizing (inaudible), NEPA, and EIS work in your own application, you refer to things that you can't rely on. In other words, you basically every time you come to the table, start the process all over again. My concern here is that the first, again, is that the first commercial effort to utilize the corridors might in fact have a competitive advantage in many cases, and therefore be in a position to establish site (inaudible), et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. So it's just a comment and a question.

I would like to compliment the interagency approach to this project, again having done business in the Rockies for nearly 30 years. This entire approach to how things are done in the West is long overdue, and the attempt to specify best and approach issues like energy corridors with multiple agencies involved at the very same time instead of one-at-a-time subsequent in periodic or sequential order is most refreshing, and I compliment the services for coming together. That'll close my questions and comments. Thank you very much for the opportunity.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you. Our next speaker will be Alex Dane [sic], and Alex will be followed by Glen Miller.

Alex Daue: Thank you, LaVerne. It's actually Alex Daue, and I'm with the Wilderness Society in Denver. And first I'd like to thank the Department of Energy, BLM and the Forest Service for holding this public hearing and giving us the opportunity to speak.

When the Department of Energy took on the responsibility of designating these energy corridors, they also took on the responsibility of doing it right. The proposed corridors, and the agencies' Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement would create corridors across 6,000 miles of federal land in the West, impacting nearly 3 million acres of publicly owned land. And these proposed corridors would have significant impacts to wildlife habitat, cultural resources, recreation opportunities, clean air and water, and lots of other resources on our publicly owned lands.

Now, we've seen some significant improvements from the preliminary draft that was released by the agencies. Many special places that were previously impacted by corridors, they have moved those corridors out of these special places, and we're very encouraged to see that. We're also encouraged to hear that the agencies are continuously working to move corridors out of Forest Service Roadless Areas, proposed wilderness, and other special places. However, this Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement still contains corridors that impact national parks, national wildlife refuges, Forest Service wilderness areas, proposed wilderness areas, wilderness areas, national monuments, and many other special places.

These corridors need to be moved out of these special places. The outstanding value of these places and their fragile nature far outweigh the need to designate corridors within them, and there are other alternatives that could minimize or completely eliminate such damaging effects. Doing this process right would involve ensuring that new pipelines and power lines are actually needed, that we cannot increase our transmission efficiency and effectiveness by using new technologies and existing transmission. You would also need to ensure that federal lands are the necessary locations, and sensitive and special places, those that I've listed, are completely avoided.

Further, the best management practices which are described in the Interagency Operating Procedures in the Draft EIS, they should be made mandatory, so that any damaging impacts to these, both federal and public lands, are minimized and mitigated. In addition, the federal and other affected lands should be realistically analyzed and thoroughly analyzed. Currently, the agencies are only analyzing effects on federal lands. However, when you connect the dots and dashes of these corridors, clearly there will be impacts to the state, private, and tribal lands in between the federal land sectors. Those lands need to be analyzed for effects as well.

In addition, once appropriate locations for these corridors are determined, any future projects should be presumptively limited to these corridors so that we do not have a proliferation of energy transmission outside of these corridors.

Consideration also needs to be given to improving access for renewable energy such as wind and solar. This is a major issue. Colorado has made an agreement to be 20 percent renewable by 2020, however, the draft corridors, as proposed, line up best with existing and proposed coal plants not with wind and solar. We need to change these corridors so that they can serve to be an

improvement for our new energy future and not take us backwards towards coal and other polluting energy sources.

Further, alternatives need to be presented and considered. The public needs to have different alternatives, including ones that emphasize renewables and increase efficiency. By only presenting a No Action alternative and the existing alternative, the agencies are only allowing the public to say what they don't like about the plans rather than giving the opportunity to comment on multiple alternatives.

I would also like to speak about some specific places that are impacted in Colorado and Utah. Diana DeGette, our congresswoman, has introduced the Colorado Wilderness Acts once again this year, and five of the units included in her wilderness bill are impacted by these proposed corridors—the Yampa River, Roan Plateau, South Shale Ridge, San Miguel River, Badger, and Badger proposed Wilderness Areas. Furthermore, the Curecanti National Recreation Area is impacted in Colorado.

In Utah we are concerned about impacts to Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument and the proposed corridor that runs right along the edge of Arches National Park. I mention those places specifically because we are here in Grand Junction and close to Utah.

To wrap up, I would like to again thank the agencies for working with us. We've seen a lot of improvements from the preliminary drafts, and we've seen that these comments work, and I would like to encourage everyone here to get involved in this process, talk about the special places you care about and how you want our energy future to look like. Thank you very much.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you. Our next speaker will be Glen Miller, and Glen will be followed by Harry—and, Harry, I'm not sure how to say your last name, I apologize.

Glen Miller: I'm Glen Miller. I live in Grand Junction. The other day is the first I heard of this, and I picked up the map, and I see a blank space between two black lines, and it's aimed at a piece of property the wife and I own, and I'm not a NIMBY person, I think this is a great idea, but it's close to a good-sized little town, and the effects on property values near those town that—well, let's face it—development land is worth a lot more than farmland today, and from a taxpayer point of view and buying the rights-of-way, sometimes you can do quite a little bit by skirting a piece of property that, one, is worth—it costs you a lot more to buy the right-of-way and, two, you'd upset a lot more people in the community. Thank you.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you, Mr. Miller. And, Harry P-e-r-o-w-l-i-e, something like that maybe? You can tell us how to say it.

Harry Perowlie: Well, thank you. Briefly, I came to ask questions rather than comment, but one of the things that I would like to say is I filled that form out before I found out my name was "other." As I look at the bottom here on the chart, I see that "other" is a very small group that hasn't been identified yet with, and I'm going to confer with Glen. I'm coming to you as a private landholder, and that's one of the agencies that I don't think is at the table near as much as it should be.

Everyone here knows the disproportionate volume of public lands versus private lands here in Colorado and in the West, and so I really think that I want to raise my name up the level a little bit and rather than become "other" in these hearings, I want us to clearly be the squeaky wheel that gets a little bit of grease because we are being taken for granted as private landholders, and to have the presumptive—the presumption that we know what's best for you after all the studies are done, and then to come to a family ranching operation that's entering the century mark and saying "This is what we've decided for you because you happen to have a piece of ground" that's between that blank space that Glen is talking about.

I really want us to be at the table and thanks for the openness and the ability for us to get to the table and comment in those regards.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you, sir. Are there other folks who are here today who would like to make a comment? Sir, would you please come up and introduce yourself?

Greg Trainer: My name is Greg Trainer, I'm the utility director for the City of Grand Junction, and I just have a few general comments, and we'll have a written—hopefully more detailed comments before the end of the comment period requirement.

After reading the executive summary, it's evident that the no effect or no impact are recurring themes, in that the designation of the corridor in and of itself doesn't create impact. Applications, we understand, for site-specific applications would create impact and would have to address specific mitigation measures.

Nevertheless, the City of Grand Junction is compelled to comment by way of education and information because of its extensive land and water interests to the southeast of Grand Junction through which the corridor passes.

The designations incorporate land and water interest that the city acquired over the last century. To protect these interests, the city has adopted a Watershed Protection Ordinance, implemented watershed regulations, and participated in the creation of the comprehensive Watershed Protection Plan among the Department of Interior, the City of Grand Junction, the town of Palisade, and Genesis Oil & Gas and other mineral interests—that's just by way of information.

The city also participated in the creation of the TransColorado natural gas pipeline project plan of development. This occurred in the mid-1990s. The pipeline crossed city properties on the face of Grand Mesa and affected city watershed interests.

We are concerned generally with the broad swath of land under the Proposed Action alternative, and with the statement that should applicants wish to apply for lands outside of the corridor, they may do so. That, combined with the no effect beam, at least in the executive summary, raised the question as to the purpose of the corridor designation in the first place, and the serious expenditure of resources to evaluate impacts that don't exist because the designation itself doesn't create an impact.

We would prefer, throughout the document terminology, rather than "no effect" that there "may be effect," and also that work that's proposed to applications would have to remain inside of the designated corridor without permissions to go beyond the corridor. Creation of the corridor does, we feel, imply future permission for detailed site-specific studies, which may be cut short because of this Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement.

Those are just general comments, thank you.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you, sir. Are there other folks who would like to comment? Anyone who has already spoken, would you like to comment again, and Mr. Hlohowskyj would you please come and unlock our computer? Does anybody else want to say something?

Okay, if there are no other speakers, we are going to close the hearing for the moment, however, if someone wants to speak between now and 5, we will certainly reopen it at that point to take those comments on the record.

I want to thank you for joining us today to provide oral comments on the Draft PEIS Proposing to Designate Energy Corridors on Federal Lands in the West. Comments are due on the Draft PEIS on February 14 and may be submitted via online project website, by mail, or by fax. All comments received by February 14 will be considered in preparing the final PEIS. Comments submitted after February 14 will be considered to the degree possible.

Again, I want to thank you for your attention and now we're going to stay around to informally discuss the Draft PEIS with you. We have some technical support and local folks from Forest Service and BLM. Thank you again.

Grand Junction, Colorado, January 15, 2008, 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

LaVerne Kyriss: Good evening. I have it is six o'clock, so with your indulgence, we will start. Thank you for joining us for a public hearing on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement on Designating Energy Corridors on Federal Lands in the West. I'm LaVerne Kyriss from the Department of Energy. I'll serve as this evening's hearing officer.

Before we begin the formal hearing, Duane Spencer, who is the acting BLM Deputy State Director - Energy, Lands, and Minerals, will make a brief opening statement. But first, if you haven't signed in or let us know that you want to speak at this meeting, you can do so right now at the registration table in the hotel lobby.

Handout materials—we've got a fact sheet and a map that shows our siting process and an example of that—are also available on the information table. Restrooms are located past the lobby down the hall.

In the event of a fire or other alarm, please take your personal belongings with you and evacuate the building as quickly, quietly, and safely as possible. The nearest exit is out this way, and then the main entrance is also an alternate exit.

With us today representing the Federal Interagency Team managing this work are Kate Winthrop from Bureau of Land Management and Glen Parker from Forest Service, who might be still paying our dinner bill, but he will be here momentarily. After we're finished taking your comments, we will stay around to informally discuss the Draft PEIS with you.

And now I'm going to turn the mike over to Duane.

Duane Spencer: Well, good evening. Is there anybody here who did not hear this same opening speech? We're scripted, obviously, here, so good evening. Thank you all for coming out to give comments on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for the Designation of Energy Transport Corridors on Federal Land in the West. As I said, I'm Duane Spencer from BLM. And in a few moments you'll hear a very brief presentation about the document which the Departments of Interior, Energy, and Agriculture are preparing to meet requirements of the Energy Policy Act of 2005.

Currently, applications for rights-of-ways to cross federal land with pipelines or electrical transmission infrastructure are considered on a case-by-case basis without much coordination among the various federal agencies whose lands are often involved in projects that transport energy across long distances. In 2005, Congress directed federal agencies to address this situation by designating energy transport corridors and also performing necessary reviews of the environmental impacts of designation. A Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement developed under the National Environmental Policy Act represents that environmental review. It is important to note that another round of site-specific NEPA analysis will be completed for each project proposed for location within a designated corridor.

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In essence, today's hearing represents step four of that process. Public comments will help the agencies further refine the locations of corridors so the important goals of the project are met, balancing the need to improve energy delivery in the West with our responsibility to protect many resources found on federal lands.

From the beginning, the agencies have been committed to this strategy, and your comments are valuable in helping to ensure that it's carried through the end of this planning effort. After we get done with the presentations, representatives from DOE, BLM, and Forest Service will be here to receive your comments and to talk informally afterwards. So thank you very much for all being here.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you, Duane. We are here this evening to receive your oral comments on the Draft PEIS. You can also submit comments via the project website, by fax, or by mail. This hearing is being webcast and transcribed, so speakers are asked to speak clearly and distinctly into the microphone. If you are having trouble hearing a speaker in this room, please signal me, and I will advise the speaker accordingly. I see that Glen Parker from Forest Service is here, and so, just so you all know who he is. After everyone who wishes to comment has spoken, I'll close the hearing.

So far, we have seven people who have signed up to speak this evening. Each of you will have an initial five minutes to make your presentation. When you have 30 seconds remaining, I'll notify you so you can wrap up.

The hearing is to take comments on a Draft Programmatic EIS prepared in response to directions given by Congress to five federal agencies—Energy, Agriculture, Interior, Commerce, and Defense. Section 368 directs the secretaries to designate corridors for oil, gas, hydrogen, pipeline, and electric transmission lines on federal lands in the 11 Western states to perform the necessary environmental reviews. Now, partly because of this requirement, we decided to prepare this Draft PEIS, that is the subject of this hearing, and to incorporate these designations into land-use, land-management, or equivalent plans. A separate and distinct public process is expected to begin later this year to identify corridors in the other 39 states.

The statute requires that when the secretaries designate these corridors, they must specify the corridor centerline, the corridor width, and the corridor compatible uses. Congress also directed the secretaries to take into account the need for electric transmission facilities to improve reliability, relieve congestion, and enhance the capacity of the national grid to deliver electricity.

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A handout summarizing this process for determining where the proposed corridors would be is located on the information table. Examples of specific corridors are also available on the project website. We believe that the analysis of these alternatives meets NEPA's requirement for a hard look. Because the Proposed Action does not involve any site-specific, ground-disturbing activities, site-specific need for review will be required to support all proposed projects within a 368-designated corridor.

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After everyone who's registered speaks, then I'll ask if anyone in the audience also wants to speak. After that, I'll go back and ask any of the previous commenters if they want to make additional comments. And we'll go through that until everyone who wants to speak has had an opportunity to share those comments. After everyone has had a chance to speak, we'll close the hearing and remind you of when comments are due and how to submit them.

If you're speaking from a prepared statement, please also leave us a copy at the registration desk. While agency representatives won't be answering questions during the hearing, we will stay afterwards to discuss the Draft PEIS with you.

Are there any questions on the process we're going to use tonight to take your comments? If there are no comments, we will now begin taking your comments.

Our first speaker is Brenda Linster. Our second speaker will be Mary McCutchan. So Brenda, if you want to use that microphone?

Brenda Linster: My name is Brenda Linster. I'm the Land and Regulatory Advisor for Midstream Services with EnCana Oil and Gas. EnCana supports the development of a Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement that Designates Energy Corridors on Federal Lands in the West. However, we have concerns with a portion of the proposed corridor that parallels the TransColorado Pipeline through Mesa and Garfield counties. The portion of TransColorado in Mesa and Garfield counties has several environmental and constructability characteristics that could result in the corridor being determined to be unsuitable for this designation, and these characteristics should be fully evaluated in the PEIS.

Specifically, there are at least two miles of the corridor of TransColorado that was installed within the Debeque cutoff road due to adjacent soil and geologic constraints. Laying another pipeline adjacent to the loaded high-pressure TransColorado Pipeline would require closing the Debeque cutoff road during construction. In conversations that EnCana has had with Mesa County officials, they have indicated that they would not allow the Debeque cutoff to be closed, and we feel this essentially eliminates that as a corridor because there wouldn't be any way that we could get in and do construction.

Secondly, during feasibility studies for the TransColorado Pipeline, it was determined that due to geology, it was not suitable for boring the Colorado River, and the TransColorado Pipeline was installed by completing an open cut. Given the changes in the regulatory environment and significant regulatory hurdles from the Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services due to concerns about the Colorado River endangered fishes, we do not believe that there is a feasible crossing of the Colorado River in this portion of the corridor.

Thirdly, there are six threatened, endangered, candidate or sensitive plant species that have known habitat along the TransColorado corridor. During construction of TransColorado, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service policies allowed numerous plant populations to be transplanted. However, since 1998 when that pipeline was installed, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service policies relating to transplanting have changed. We believe there are concerns there that need to be addressed.

And in addition to those factors, even though this is just looking at federal lands, there are at least two landowners that were condemned as part of the TransColorado Pipeline, and we feel that

impact to private landowners should be addressed. We've had discussions with two of those landowners, and they have indicated that they would oppose any future pipelines on their property and would force the energy companies into condemnation.

We realize that the intent of the PEIS is to designate corridors on federal lands, and we realize that individual projects would undergo further project-specific and site-specific environmental analysis. However, we believe that given these four known factors along the proposed portion of TransColorado in Garfield and Mesa counties, that that warrants additional analysis before being designated as a federal corridor in this PEIS. Thank you.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you, Ms. Linster. Our next speaker—page turned—is Mary McCutchan, and Mary will be followed by Alex—and Alex, I just lost how to pronounce your last name. Daue. I'm so sorry. So Mary first.

Mary McCutchan: I'll keep this very brief, because I don't have specific comments, and I really don't want to be webcast. It sounds painful. So I'd just like to say that I've spent a couple of months without electricity or gasoline. What I can't spend two months without is water, so I would urge our public further to keep considering the water resource out here. I understand this would make things more efficient, and I'm all in favor of efficiency. I think that's great. I could see the push behind this. But I would suggest that although you say you have a 90-day comment period, I don't know that the public has been widely informed. Perhaps they have, but I don't have that perception myself. So I would just ask that perhaps the date can be extended to the end of February instead of Valentine's Day. Thank you.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you, Ms. McCutchan. Our next speaker is Alex Daue, and Alex will be followed by Sasha Nelson.

Alex Daue: My name's Alex Daue, and I'm with the Wilderness Society in Denver. And first I'd like to thank the Department of Energy, Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management for providing this public hearing and giving us the opportunity to comment. When the Department of Energy decided to take on the responsibility of designating these corridors across the West, they also took on the responsibility of doing it right. These corridors, as LaVerne has mentioned, will impact 6,000 miles of federal land across the West, impacting over, nearly 3 million acres of publicly owned land. There will be impacts to wildlife habitat, clean air and water, recreation opportunities, cultural resources, and many other resources on our public lands.

By taking on this responsibility to do it right, there are several things that the agencies could do to make a better plan than what they've got so far. These things include making sure that new pipelines and power lines are actually needed, that we can't get the transmission we need from what we've got or upgrades as far as new technology that comes out for transmission. Also, that federal lands are the necessary and appropriate locations for these corridors, and that special places on federal lands are not impacted. We've seen significant improvements from the preliminary draft that the agencies released as far as impacts to special places. They've moved many corridors which were impacting special places, and we're encouraged to hear that they're continuing to move corridors to get them out of proposed Wilderness Areas, Forest Service Roadless Areas, and other special places. But the Draft PEIS still has impacts to many, many special places, including national parks, wildlife refuges, proposed and existing wilderness, and other special places.

We'd also like to see that the best management practices, which are described as the Interagency Operating Procedures in the PEIS, are carried forward when the Records of Decisions are made in the final, and are made mandatory at that point. They will do a lot to help minimize and mitigate negative effects to special places and our public lands in general.

Further, we would like the agencies to fully analyze the cumulative impacts of these corridors on not only the federal lands, but the state, private, and tribal lands which will be impacted once the dots and dashes on the federal lands are connected. There will be impacts across this landscape, and we'd like to see analysis of those impacts.

Further, we'd like to see that once appropriate locations are determined, that corridors are presumptively limited to those locations. We'd also like to see consideration given to access for renewable energy such as wind and solar. The agencies have done analysis of wind and solar resources and have attempted to create corridors which connect those resources, but currently the Draft PEIS does the best job of connecting existing and proposed coal plants, and that is not part of the renewable energy future that Colorado or the West has envisioned. Colorado has made a commitment to have 20 percent renewables by 2020. We need to have these corridors linking up solar, geothermal, wind potential so that we can achieve that.

Lastly, we need to have alternatives. The agencies have provided an Action alternative and a No Action alternative, but the public needs to see multiple different alternatives so that they can choose which is best. Right now, all the public can do is say what they don't like about the alternatives presented, so we'd like to see different alternatives presented which analyze potential for renewables, limits that impact to special places, and makes sure that these corridors are designated correctly. Thank you.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you, Alex. Our next speaker is Sasha Nelson, and Sasha will be followed by Don Moyer.

Sasha Nelson: Good evening. My name is Sasha Nelson, and I represent the Colorado Environmental Coalition. I'd like to speak about two primary concerns. The first is the idea that designation is not an impact and therefore we're not having impacts. We would like to argue that designation itself is the impact, because it makes legitimate the idea that these corridors can be developed and can be used in the future and/or widened, if they exist.

But I'd like you to keep that in mind when I talk about something else, another concern, as Alex mentioned, our special places. And I'd like to give you a specific example of a northwest Colorado complex and why it is special. So I'll speak specifically at the Yampa Valley Cross-Mountain and Diamond Breaks, both which have proposed new corridor sites or existing corridor sites that would then be widened under this Draft.

Now, the reason they are special, besides their intrinsic value as wild places, is also because this is a topic near and dear to my heart as an animal behavioral scientist. They provide some of our best wildlife habitat in the West. Specifically, we have the largest elk herd, we have one of the largest mule deer herds, and we have one of the healthiest populations of the northern sage grouse. All of these animals are very important to the economy and well-being of the people of western Colorado and northwestern Colorado specifically, as well as value for their intrinsic specialness.

By designating corridors within or very close to currently proposed citizens' wilderness sites, which this plan does, we threaten those complexes which provide habitat for the migrating wildlife species I've mentioned and/or critical breeding grounds for those species. And that is why it's important for us to look again at this Draft, see if by reconfiguring the proposed corridor sites, we can eliminate that, while still providing balanced energy development to suit our current and future energy needs.

Again, I'd like to go back to the idea that when we designate these sites, even though there will be specific NEPA review when proposals come up, by the very act of designating, that itself is an impact. It legitimizes the idea that these places can in the future be developed, and that, of course—for me, anyway—threatens the special intrinsic value of the habitat of these special places. Thanks.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you so much, Ms. Nelson. Our next speaker will be Don Moyer. He will be followed by Mark Schofield.

Don Moyer: My name is Don Moyer, and I just wanted to make a general comment about the pipeline corridor concept, and particularly as it relates to gas transmission lines. I think it should be considered, when you're talking about gas transmission lines, that where you are in a sedimentary basin that is prospective for oil and gas, a diversity of gas transmission routes is very beneficial. Because in many cases, you have federal land fee minerals that are already leased and subject to the production of oil and gas, and the more diversity of gas transmission lines that you have that can be accessed by that production, the less impact you will have in having to run gathering lines and intermediate lines to get to just the transmission lines that are on a given corridor. So, you know, I suggest, you know, that in the sedimentary basins that are considered prospective for production, that you consider line alternatives as far as gas transmission is concerned. Thank you.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you, Mr. Moyer. Our next commenter will be Mark Schofield. Mr. Schofield will be followed by Joe Neuhof.

Mark Schofield: My name is Mark Schofield. I'm with Western Colorado Congress. We are an alliance for community action made up of eight community groups and over 3,000 members across western Colorado, and we organize people to protect and enhance their quality of life by working for a healthy environment and sustainable economies. I appreciate this opportunity to share some brief comments, and then we'll share more in-depth comments in written form.

Just to share a couple of specific concerns, some of which have been mentioned at this point is the potential impact of these proposed energy corridors that have on public lands, particularly BLM lands that are being considered for Wilderness designation or proposed as such by citizens, including areas like South Shale Ridge to the northeast of here, San Miguel River, a citizen-proposed wilderness in San Miguel County.

Just briefly, on the note of San Miguel County, I had a conversation with a county commissioner from there who expressed some concern that he only just recently learned about this opportunity to comment from a local property rights activist in his county, just a couple of days ago. So I've had a couple of conversations with staff and a county commissioner from San Miguel County. And hopefully, a previous speaker said there will be more awareness of potential impacts posed by this proposed energy corridor and that the public will have its standard opportunity to comment.

Another specific concern has to do with the proposed corridor overlapping with municipal watersheds. The City of Grand Junction just this last year adopted a watershed ordinance and is implementing watershed regulations. And again, as a previous speaker noted, water is a tremendously vital and important resource here in the West and to the citizens of Grand Junction and others on the Western Slope. And so, as any proposal moves forward, cities like the City of Grand Junction should be very closely consulted with.

A second, just to share that this draft, granted that the Department of Energy and BLM and Forest Service are following direction received in the 2005 Energy Policy Act—which we believe in this case is very fundamentally flawed for some different reasons—one is that by connecting existing and proposed future coal plants by this kind of transmission created, it locks us into this form of energy production and transmission, and thereby short-circuiting the many potential economic benefits of renewable energy production in our state and in our region, as well as the opportunities for distributed generation such as rooftop solar and thereby negating the need to have such massive infrastructure to move energy around vast geographic areas.

Finally, I just want to, I think that point about, you know, question the need of whether or not these corridors are necessary is—just earlier today, the Western Governors' Association released a report stating that the Western states in the U.S. could save 48,000 megawatts, 1.8 trillion gallons of water, and create a net gain of \$53 billion during the next 15 years by encouraging energy conservation in homes and office buildings. And this is, again, according to a coalition of Western governors and the research they have done. So I hope before we commit ourselves to linking energy technologies of the 1950s, that we'll look ahead to the opportunities for distributed energy and for clean, renewable energy, which in many cases will require transmission. So that should be part of why this is looked at in this process. Thank you.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you, Mr. Schofield, and thank you, Ihor. I was supposed to hit the button, and I didn't. Our next speaker is Joe Neuhof, and Joe will be followed by Scott Braden.

Joe Neuhof: Good evening. My name's Joe Neuhof. I'm with the Colorado Environmental Coalition. I live here in Grand Junction. I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft.

I want to echo a few points that were made already this evening, and I think what it comes down to for us is, are we trying to be efficient or effective? And it seems like we're on the path of using new energy corridors and existing energy corridors in an efficient way, but we're lacking in the effectiveness to a certain degree. And just to echo a few points, we're going through some real special places that are vital wildlife habitat, places like national parks, wilderness study areas, wilderness areas. I think we can do better than that, and I think it's effective to do better than that.

I also want to—and it's been mentioned before—say that we have a real opportunity in Colorado to be a leader with renewable energy, and there's an incredible amount of income and jobs associated with the renewable industry, and I think that this draft, although some of those vital areas of Colorado where there are this renewable energy source, have been analyzed, I don't think it reflects the type of energy corridor allowance that we would need to really take advantage of these prime airsheds and prime opportunities for solar power. And that's where we're headed. The Governor has worked for 20 percent renewables by 2020. To get there, we need to be effective in the corridors that we create so that we can get that energy from where it exists.

Just real briefly on a final note, a place that's real important to me that I've spent a lot of time with my family is South Shale Ridge. It's a beautiful place if you've never been out there. Mark had mentioned it earlier, and it's a place that's been determined to have wilderness character. It's a place that's been a focus of the energy industry, and folks have been working for a long time to find balance in that place and its unique geology and endangered species. And I think, for me, this personally, allowing an energy corridor to exist through that special place would—it would be terrible, and it would hurt the community that uses that place to recreate, and it would hurt some of the species that exist there that don't exist anywhere else.

So that's all I have. Thank you very much.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you very much, Mr. Neuhof. Scott Braden is our next speaker.

Scott Braden: My name's Scott Braden. I'm a field advocate with Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance. I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the proposed West-wide energy corridor PEIS, particularly how the proposed corridor will impact natural resources in Utah. We recognize that planning proactively to meet the energy infrastructure needs of the country is an important task. However, planning to meet those infrastructure needs should seek to minimize impacts and damage to natural resources.

The PEIS proposes to designate utility corridors across or adjacent to lands that retain wilderness characteristics, wilderness study areas, Wilderness Areas, lands included in the citizen-proposed

America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, and several national parks. Communities would also be impacted by this plan, most notably Green River and Moab. The PEIS would overlay many areas within the citizen-proposed America's Red Rock Wilderness Act, such as Behind the Rocks, Gold Bar Rim, and Arches adjacent near Moab, Lower Flaming Gorge, Deadhorse Pass, and Coldspring Mountain near Vernal, Lost Spring Wash, and Price River near Price. And all of these preceding areas have been found to possess wilderness characteristics already by the BLM. The PEIS should include an alternative that avoids these lands that are included in this pending wilderness bill until Congress can consider these lands for wilderness designation.

The proposed corridor would be immediately adjacent to Arches National Park, within a mile of Dinosaur National Monument, and actually cross lands within Grand Staircase and Escalante National Monument. The visual impacts and the impacts of noise and pollution associated with the construction and operation of pipelines and other accessories to the corridor must be given a hard look to make sure that this project does not affect the air quality and viewsheds of these parks and monuments.

The proposed corridor would pass within a mile of two designated Wilderness Areas in Utah—the Beaver Dam Wilderness near St. George, and the Paria River and Vermilion Cliffs Wilderness east of Kanab. The Wilderness Act provides the highest level of land protection to these units, so the proposed corridor must be sure to avoid all negative impacts—including visual—to the naturalness of these Wilderness Areas.

The Town of Moab, Utah, risks serious negative impacts from this proposal—air quality, visual impact, noise pollution could contribute to a serious threat to the quality of life appreciated by folks in Moab, myself included. We would question, where is the range of reasonable alternatives for this plan, including an analysis of renewable energy production and delivery needs? Has the federal government analyzed the need for this scale of industrial development impacting so many wilderness-quality lands in Utah?

The gaps indicated in the proposed corridor in this plan—indicating land ownership other than BLM, mostly—should be examined in the alternatives, because they will surely lead to important and contingent issues of eminent domain, private property condemnation, and possible release of Wilderness Study Areas. Thank you.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you very much, Mr. Braden. Our next speaker will be Wayne Hoskisson.

Wayne Hoskisson: Good evening, and thank you for the opportunity to comment. I am Wayne Hoskisson. I am the chair of the Utah Chapter of the Sierra Club, but I live in Moab, just across the border, a lot closer than Salt Lake City.

I am concerned about some of the routes that are proposed here, in particular the one that goes through the very southwest corner of Utah, and that is an area with a lot of wilderness proposal. It's a lot of critical habitat for desert tortoise. In fact, it's the only desert tortoise habitat in Utah, so I'm very concerned about that particular area. I think that in general, that route should indeed follow 15 until it gets to St. George, and then it should follow the old highway to avoid the Virgin River Gorge and go on towards Mesquite that way.

I'm also concerned about the route that basically cuts through the Moab area. I think that, again, it should follow the highway routes rather than going cross-country as it seems to do on there. And I think that one of the things that we need to be very concerned about is that, you know, we're already fragmenting the landscape tremendously throughout the West, and this is only going to add to it unless we can stick to already disturbed routes through the West. Thank you.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you very much, Mr. Hoskisson. Are there any other speakers in the audience who would like to make comments right now? Are there any folks who have already commented who would like to add to their comments? Come back up, Alex. Tell us who you are and who you represent.

Alex Daue: Okay. As I said, I'm Alex Daue with the Wilderness Society in Denver, and I just forgot to mention that five of the special places that are impacted in Colorado by these corridors are proposed Wilderness Areas included in Congresswoman Diana DeGette's Colorado Wilderness Act. And these are the Yampa River, Roan Plateau, South Shale Ridge, San Miguel River, and Badger proposed Wilderness Areas. And as many other people have commented, I think that we can do an alternative that does not impact these special places, especially ones that are part of legislation before Congress now. Thank you.

LaVerne Kyriss: Thank you, Alex. Are there other folks in the audience who would like to comment for the record? If there are no other speakers, I'm now going to close the hearing for the moment. However, if someone wants to speak between now and eight o'clock, we will go back on the record and give you that opportunity to make formal oral comments.

I want to thank you for joining us today to provide your comments on this Draft PEIS Proposing to Designate Energy Corridors on Federal Lands in the West. Comments on the Draft PEIS are due February 14 and may be submitted online on the project website, by mail, or by fax. All comments received by February 14 will be considered in preparing the Final PEIS. Comments submitted after February 14 will be considered to the degree possible.

Again, I want to thank you for your attention, and we'll now stay around to informally discuss the Draft PEIS with you.