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National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



Fax

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To: Office of Electricity Delivery and Energy Reliability
U.S. Department of Energy

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Comments:

The following comments from the National Park Service are in regard to the preliminary draft energy corridor maps.

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United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

July 10, 2006

Ms. Julia Souder
Western Regional Coordinator
Office of Electricity Delivery, and Energy Reliability
U.S. Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

Dear Ms. Souder:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the preliminary Draft Energy Corridor Maps. We understand that this is one of the steps in developing the draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) and we look forward to continue to work with the Department of Energy on this very important project. Our comments on the preliminary draft maps of potential energy corridors on Federal lands in the 11 western states follow:

General Comments

The National Park System's 390 units cover more than 84 million acres and represent the heritage and spirit of America. The National Park Service conserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of this and future generations.

The NPS is supportive of the energy needs of the country and we are committed to work with you during this process. However, it is the position of the NPS that energy corridors should not be designated in a way that may impair any parkland or on lands in programs administered by the NPS.

The NPS has only limited legal authority to permit rights-of-way for utilities, and no authority to permit oil, gas or other petroleum product pipelines. An NPS permit will be required to install utilities within the corridors designated on parklands subject to Section 368. The NPS will only permit those projects that do not impair or derogate the values and purposes for which the park unit was authorized.

NPS Units Potentially Impacted by Proposed Corridors

The lack of detail on the proposed maps and corridors makes it difficult to comment with any certainty on the impact of the proposed corridors on specific parklands and lands administered by NPS programs. There is also some confusion as to the proposed width of the corridors, which are shown on the current corridor maps as 3,000 feet. Any increase in width would increase the likelihood of impact on parklands.

After reviewing data and maps provided by Argonne Labs the best we can determine is that corridors as currently drawn directly impact the following parks:

Arches National Park	Utah
Craters of the Moon	Idaho
Curecanti National Recreation Area	Colorado
Fort Bowie National Historic Site	Arizona
Glen Canyon National Recreation Area	Arizona/Utah
Grant-Kohrs Ranch National Historic Site	Montana
Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument	Idaho
Hohokam Pima National Monument	Arizona
Joshua Tree National Park	California
Lake Mead National Recreation Area	Nevada/Arizona
Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area	Washington
Lassen Volcano National Park	California
Minidoka Internment National Monument	Idaho
Mojave National Preserve	California

In addition, our review shows that the following units are within five miles of a proposed corridor and could be directly impacted by corridor realignments:

Aztec Ruins National Monument	New Mexico
Canyon de Chelly National Monument	Arizona
Dinosaur National Monument	Colorado
Fossil Butte National Monument	Wyoming
Hubble Trading Post National Historic Site	Arizona
Mesa Verde National Park	Colorado
Petroglyph National Monument	New Mexico
Saguaro National Park	Arizona
Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument	Arizona
Walnut Canyon National Monument	Arizona
Wupatki National Monument	Arizona

Due to the conceptual nature of this Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) it is difficult, if not impossible, to fully determine what, if any, impacts will occur from development in the proposed energy corridors. In all cases the design and location of the installation and topography and natural resources of the area will determine the level of impact on NPS lands. Possible mitigation measures will need to be taken as project specific Environmental Assessments and Environmental Impact Statements are developed. The PEIS should include the requirement that the design of utilities in corridors within close proximity to NPS-administered units must include input from the affected NPS units to minimize or mitigate any impacts to the resources of the unit or the experience of the visitor.

In addition to "units" of the National Park System, the National Park Service also has management responsibility or technical and/or financial assistance to several programs – Affiliated Areas, the National Trails System, the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, and

National Heritage Areas – which are closely linked in importance and purpose to those areas managed by the Service. These areas preserve important segments of the nation's heritage. The National Park Service also manages the National Natural Landmarks Program and the National Historic Landmarks Program.

The Affiliated Areas comprise a variety of locations that preserve significant properties outside the National Park System. Some of these have been recognized by Acts of Congress, others have been designated national historic sites under the Historic Sites Act of 1935. All draw on technical or financial aid from the National Park Service. No affiliated areas appear to be affected by the proposed corridors.

The National Trails System includes scenic trails which are 100 miles or longer, continuous, primarily non-motorized routes of outstanding recreational opportunity, and national historic trails which commemorate historic (and prehistoric) routes of travel that are of significance to the entire Nation. The proposed corridors will likely have the potential to impact eligible and contributing segments of the California, Oregon, Mormon Pioneer, Pony Express, Santa Fe, El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, and Old Spanish National Trails. It should also be noted that a study is presently underway to assess a potential Ice Age Corridor from Minnesota to the Pacific Ocean. The study unit includes portions of Montana that could be impacted by the proposed corridor, but the study is in a preliminary phase and sufficient data is unavailable to assess direct impacts at this time.

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System includes selected rivers of the Nation which, with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, that are to be preserved in free-flowing condition, and be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. The NPS is responsible for ensuring that rivers under its care are fully preserved in their free-flowing condition, and that water quality and outstandingly remarkable values are protected pursuant to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA). Early coordination with the NPS is recommended to ensure potential project impacts do not adversely affect any designated river's water quality, free-flowing condition, or other protected values, including scenery. Within the proposed project area (11 western states), the NPS has statutory management and/or regulatory responsibilities on 7 river segments which are components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, pursuant to the WSRA. Based on preliminary information none of these designated rivers appear to be within preliminary draft corridors.

National Heritage Areas are regions in which entire communities live and work, and in which residents, businesses, and local governments have come together to conserve special landscapes and their own heritage. Through a number of independent authorities, Congress has established 27 National Heritage Areas around the country. In these areas the NPS does not acquire land, but provides technical and financial assistance to the management entities. One National Heritage Area is located in the proposed project area – Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area, Yuma, Arizona. Based on preliminary information it appears that this site will not be affected.

National Natural Landmarks (NNL) Program recognizes and encourages the conservation of outstanding examples of our country's natural history. The program identifies and recognizes the

best examples of biological and geological features in both public and private ownership. The NNL program regulations (36 CFR 62.6) state that Federal agencies should consider the potential impacts from proposed projects on NNLs and explore alternatives during the NEPA process that result in minimal impact to these properties. Of the 126 NNLs within the 11 western States, the following were identified as having the potential to be impacted. The Bitter Lake Group in New Mexico appears to be directly within the route of a proposed corridor, while Como Bluff, Wyoming; Garden Park, Colorado and Mathers Natural Area, New Mexico, all are within a 5-mile buffer of a proposed corridor.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

The NPS also takes this opportunity to express again its concern about the potential impact of proposed energy corridors on lands purchased for parks and open spaces through the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is a conservation program established by Congress in 1964 to create parks and open spaces; to protect wetlands and refuges; to preserve wildlife and to enhance recreational opportunities. Property acquired or developed with LWCF assistance is to be retained and used for public outdoor recreation. Property acquired or developed with LWCF assistance may not be wholly or partially converted to uses other than public outdoor recreation without the prior, written approval of the NPS Regional Director. The Regional Director's decision is based on the criteria contained in the LWCF Act and its implementing regulations. See 16 U.S.C. § 460/-8 and 36 C.F.R. Part 59.

Conversion decisions trigger NEPA compliance obligations, which are carried out by the party seeking the conversion, subject to NPS review and approval. The NPS will only consider conversion requests submitted by a state. All applications must conform to the application procedures contained in 36 CFR Part 59. The NPS Regional Director has the discretionary authority to approve or disapprove a conversion request. Designation of a utility corridor on land acquired or developed with LWCF assistance would constitute a "conversion" of park land to non-park uses because the project would limit and diminish the public outdoor recreation value of these parks and lands within new rights-of-way. As a result, the project proponent must initiate the process for conversion approval with local park managers, who would then make the determination of whether to forward the conversion requests through the state for ultimate approval by the NPS Regional Director.

The PEIS should mention that approval of a parkland conversion is a necessary, legal precursor for projects proposed for construction on lands acquired or developed with LWCF grants. For such projects, the NPS would determine whether to approve the conversion and this decision would be based on a NEPA document prepared by the project proponent. For projects approved by the NPS, the NPS would enter in a binding, written agreement with the project proponent to ensure that the project is carried out in accordance with the terms and conditions of the NEPA decision document.

We strongly support the concept of consolidation of energy transmission facilities to minimize overall impacts this type of development may cause and to enhance the efficient delivery of these

needed resources. Our desire is to continue to communicate with project proponents in a timely fashion, so that we can properly protect and preserve NPS resources for the pleasure and enjoyment of future generations. Energy development and stewardship of our natural and cultural resources are both critical to the future of this country. Both can be accomplished with early and open communication and a mutual desire to comply with existing laws and regulations.

Thank you for consideration of these comments. Please direct questions to Lee Dickinson, Special Park Uses Program Manager, at 202/513-7092.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Martin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end.

Steve Martin
Deputy Director, Operations