



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Wyoming State Office



and
United States Department of Energy
WESTERN AREA POWER ADMINISTRATION

In Reply Refer To:
WYW-177893
COC-72929
UTU-87238
NVN-86732
DOE/EIS-0450

Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review is the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed TransWest Express Transmission Project (Project) and accompanying land use plan amendments for affected Bureau of Land Management (BLM) areas and United States Forest Service (USFS) National Forest units. TransWest Express, LLC (Applicant) submitted applications for right-of-way (ROW) grants and special use permits to use portions of the National System of Public Lands in southern Wyoming, northwestern Colorado, across Utah, and southern Nevada. The Applicant also has submitted a statement of interest and entered into an agreement with the Western Area Power Administration (Western) for development support and to potentially obtain financing for the Project from the borrowing authority granted to Western under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 amendment of the Hoover Power Plant Act of 1984 (Hoover Act). The Applicant-proposed transmission line route and route alternatives cross public lands administered by 14 BLM Field Offices and five national forests over four States. The BLM Wyoming State Office and Western have been designated as joint lead Federal agencies for the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) process, and have mutually overseen the preparation of the EIS.

The Final EIS has been prepared in consultation with 49 cooperating agencies and in compliance with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations for Implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500). The Final EIS also conforms to the BLM's, Western's, and the USFS requirements for NEPA implementation as described in the U.S. Department of the Interior's NEPA regulations (43 CFR 46) and BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1), the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) NEPA Implementing Procedures (10 CFR 1021), and U.S. Department of Agriculture's NEPA regulations (36 CFR 220), respectively. Accompanying land use plan amendments were prepared for areas not consistent with the administering agency plan pursuant to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, the National Forest Management Act of 1976, and the BLM and USFS land use planning regulations in 43 CFR 1610.5 and 36 CFR 219.10.

The Final EIS analyzes the consequences of the agencies' decisions on granting a BLM ROW and USFS special use permits to construct and operate an extra-high voltage, direct current (DC) transmission system. The Final EIS is also part of Western's development activities in assisting the Applicant and precedes Western's decision whether to use its borrowing authority to finance and/or hold partial ownership with TransWest in the resulting transmission facilities and capacity.

The Project would provide the transmission infrastructure and capacity to deliver approximately 3,000 megawatts of electric power from renewable and other energy sources in south-central Wyoming to a substation hub in southern Nevada. The Applicant-proposed Project would consist of an approximately 730-mile-long, 600-kilovolt, high voltage DC transmission line and two terminals, each containing an alternating current/direct current (AC/DC) converter station. The northern AC/DC converter station would be located near Sinclair, Wyoming, and the southern AC/DC converter station would be located near the Marketplace Hub – a group of substations approximately 25 miles south of Las Vegas, Nevada. A ground electrode system (required for transmission line emergency shutdown) would be installed within 100 miles of each terminal. The Project would retain an option for future interconnection with the Intermountain Power Project transmission system in Millard County, Utah.

Alternatives to the proposed Project were developed in response to issues raised during the NEPA scoping period. The Project has been divided geographically into four regions for analysis based on common locations where project alternative routes converge and can be combined with other alternative routes in the region. Each region contains an Applicant-proposed route and two to five alternative routes that are analyzed in this EIS, as well as the No Action Alternative. BLM and Western, through consultation with other Federal, State, and local cooperating agencies, have identified an agency preferred alternative within each of the four regions that would combine to create a continuous route from Wyoming to Nevada, totaling approximately 730 miles. The BLM and USFS have identified plan amendments for each of the land use plans that would require modifications if the agency preferred or other alternative is selected.

The Final EIS and accompanying plan amendments are not decision documents. Their purpose is to inform the public and interested parties of the relative impacts of the proposed action and alternatives. The Final EIS also provides information to other regulatory agencies for use in their decision-making processes.

Agency Preferred Alternative

The major change between the Draft and Final EIS was a shift in the agency preferred alternative. In the Draft EIS the agency preferred alternative was comprised of:

- Alternative I-D (Region I),
- Alternative II-F (Region II),
- Alternative III-B (Region III), and
- Alternative IV-A (Region IV).

In the Final EIS, the agency preferred alternative has been revised to:

- Alternative I-B (Region I),
- Alternative II-G (Region II),
- Alternative III-D (Region III), and
- Alternative IV-A (Region IV).

The agency preferred alternative identified in the Final EIS was revised based on the analysis in the Draft EIS and resulting public and agency input on that analysis. It meets the agencies' respective purposes and needs while balancing the Applicant's objectives with the Federal land management multiple-use mandate.

BLM's Decision on the Right-of-Way Application

The BLM will decide whether to grant, grant with modifications, or deny the Proposed Action or one of the action alternatives. The BLM's Decision will be documented in the Record of Decision (ROD), which will be issued prior to the ROW Grant being approved. The BLM is considering the relative impacts of the alternatives, the needs of the co-lead agency (Western), and the needs of cooperating agencies when determining whether or not to authorize those portions of the project occurring on BLM lands. BLM's decision is informed by the required NEPA analysis and disclosure in this EIS.

Western's Decision

Western's decision is whether it would use its borrowing authority to partially finance and/or hold partial ownership with TransWest in the resulting transmission facilities and capacity. Prior to committing funds for the Project, Western will evaluate whether it is in the public interest; will not adversely impact system reliability, system operations, or other statutory obligations; and will be adequate to make repayment of the loan from Treasury. The Project will also be evaluated in terms of the ability to satisfy the requirements of Western's Transmission Infrastructure Program (TIP) and its authority under the Hoover Act. As with BLM's decision, Western's decision is informed by this EIS, contingent on the completion of development agreement activities including negotiation of commercial agreements that could include interconnection, ownership, operations, maintenance, marketing, and acquisition of ROWs on private property.

Final EIS Availability

The publication of the Notice of Availability (NOA) in the *Federal Register* by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency begins Western's required 30-day waiting period as well as BLM's concurrent 30-day Final EIS public availability period and plan amendment protest period. The proposed BLM plan amendments included in the Final EIS are also subject to a 60-day Governor's consistency review concurrent with the 30-day periods above. Protests must be filed within 30 days of the date that the Environmental Protection Agency publishes its Notice of Availability in the Federal Register

To submit a protest via regular mail, send to BLM Director (210), Attention: Protest Coordinator, P.O. Box 71383, Washington, D.C. 20004-1383. Protests submitted via overnight mail should be sent to: BLM Director (210), Attention: Protest Coordinator, 20 M Street SE, Room 2134LM, Washington, D.C. 20003.

Any questions or concerns regarding this Final EIS may be addressed to:

Bureau of Land Management,
Wyoming State Office
Attn: Sharon Knowlton, TWE Project
Manager
P.O. Box 20678
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82003
E-mail: TransWest_WYMail@blm.gov
(307) 775-6124
Fax: (307) 775-6203

Western Area Power Administration
Attn: Steve Blazek, NEPA Document
Manager
P.O. Box 281213
Lakewood, CO 80228-8213
E-mail: sblazek@wapa.gov

The Final EIS is available for review during normal business hours at the following locations or at the following website: <http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/documents/hdd/transwest.html>.

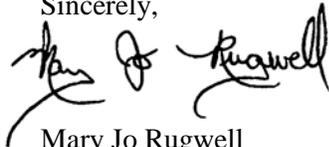
BLM Wyoming State Office
BLM Rawlins Field Office
BLM Colorado State Office
BLM Little Snake Field Office
BLM White River Field Office
BLM Grand Junction Field Office
BLM Utah State Office
BLM Cedar City Field Office
BLM Fillmore Field Office

BLM Moab Field Office
BLM Price Field Office
BLM Richfield Field Office
BLM St. George Field Office
BLM Vernal Field Office
BLM Nevada State Office
BLM Caliente Field Office
BLM Las Vegas Field Office
USFS Dixie National Forest

The USFS will issue its own NOA in which it will describe its agency-specific decision and objection process.

Thank you for your interest and participation in this NEPA process.

Sincerely,



Mary Jo Rugwell
Acting State Director, BLM Wyoming



Mark A. Gabriel
Administrator, Western Area Power Administration

Enclosures – As Stated