

TRANSWEST EXPRESS TRANSMISSION PROJECT

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Issue 3

Western
BLM

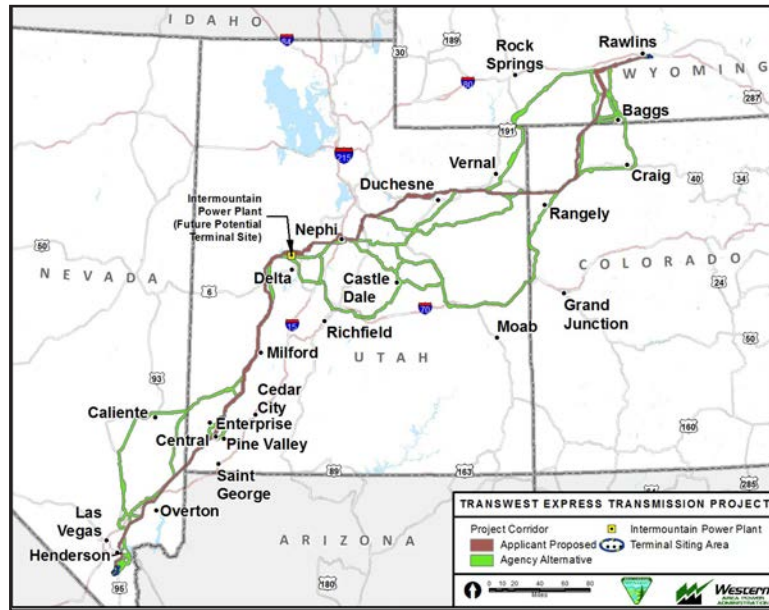
This issue of the TransWest Express Transmission Project (TWE Project) newsletter provides an update to project activities and the next steps in preparing the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Western Area Power Administration (Western) are joint-lead agencies preparing the EIS.

Preparing the Draft EIS

The BLM and Western (Lead Agencies) are currently preparing the Draft EIS for the TransWest Express Transmission (TWE) Project. The first step in the process was to develop a reasonable range of alternatives to TWE's proposed action.

How are the alternatives developed?

Following public scoping, the BLM and Western began the process of identifying the alternative corridors and ancillary facilities to be analyzed in the Draft EIS. The Draft EIS must consider a reasonable range of alternatives that meet the applicant's purpose and need. The process considers comments received from the public and consultation with the cooperating agencies including federal, state and local agencies, as well as the Tribes. Some alternative corridors were eliminated from consideration; the reasons for their elimination will be described in the Draft EIS. Additional alternative corridors emerged as reasonable considerations for analysis. The map above identifies the alternative corridors resulting from the alternative analysis that will be evaluated in the Draft EIS.



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What are the next steps for preparing the Draft EIS?

Once the alternative corridors were identified, BLM and Western began collecting data for the resources that could be affected in the project area. These data will be used to prepare the affected environment section of the Draft EIS. In coordination with the cooperating agencies, BLM and Western will assess the impacts that the proposed project and potential resource management plan amendments could have on each resource. Environmental impacts within the proposed corridor and the alternative corridors will be compared and presented in the Draft EIS. The process will be documented and all impacts disclosed in the Draft EIS.

BLM and Western anticipate the Draft EIS will be available for a public review in late spring 2013. The NEPA process chart to the right shows opportunities to provide comments and to participate in the NEPA process. You are encouraged to participate and comment on the Draft EIS during the 90-day public review period.

Please visit the BLM's project website at:

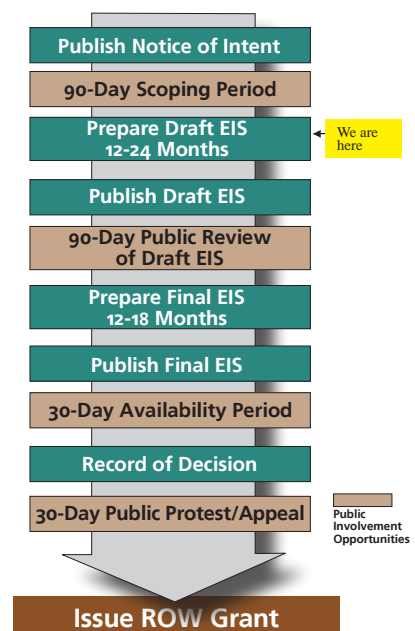
www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/info/NEPA/hdd/transwest.htm

or Western's project website:

<http://go.usa.gov/YCeC>

to stay informed about project activities.

Environmental Impact Statement Process (NEPA Process)



How does the BLM and Forest Service plan amendment process work with the NEPA process?

BLM and Western consulted the individual BLM Field Offices and Forest Service Regional Offices to identify the potential plan amendments that would be required for TWE routes that cross their lands. Multiple plan amendments may be required for portions of the TWE project that do not fully conform to the administering federal agency's land use plan. The plan amendment NEPA process is occurring concurrently with the Project NEPA process. The plan amendments will be completed in compliance with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1975, National Forest Management Act of 1976, and associated regulations, policies, and guidelines of the agencies requiring the plan amendments. Potential plan amendments will be identified and analyzed in the Draft EIS. Through the EIS process, the BLM and USFS will decide whether to amend portions of their resource management plans as a prerequisite to approval of the TWE project.

TWE Project one of seven projects selected as a pilot for the Interagency RRTT

Last year, the Obama Administration established the Rapid Response Team for Transmission (RRTT). The interagency initiative focuses on the proposed transmission projects that will enhance infrastructure reliability, promote greater integration of renewable electricity sources to the grid, and reduce the need for additional power plants. The purpose of the RRTT is to improve the quality and timeliness for permitting, review, and consultation for these infrastructure projects.

The TWE Project was one of seven projects selected throughout the country. In January 2012, representatives from the RRTT met with project participants in Cheyenne, WY; Denver, CO; Las Vegas, NV; and Salt Lake City, UT to learn more about the project and to identify where the RRTT could assist in the permitting process. The RRTT will support the BLM and Western on the TWE Project through coordination of the permitting review among the numerous Federal and state agencies involved, providing consistent consultation with the tribal governments, and assisting in resolving interagency conflicts.

Bureau of Land Management

P.O. Box 20678

Cheyenne, WY 82003

