

BLM delays release of EIS for Gateway West

By JUSTIN PITTMAN
Reporter

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has delayed the release of their draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Rocky Mountain Power and Idaho Power's joint Gateway West Transmission Line project until the Spring of 2010.

"This extension is a welcome development. We remain committed to evaluating all reasonable options and are taking steps to address areas where consideration of additional alternatives may benefit the project and the public," wrote RMP president Richard Walje in a press release issued after the BLM's July 16 announcement of the delay.

The statement had originally been slated for release in August 2009 and will now include any reasonable alternatives proposed by Sept. 4. A 90 day public comment period will still take place after the draft's release.

"We want to ensure communities and groups have full opportunity to share their ideas," Don Simpson, the BLM's Wyoming State Director explained in a separate press release issued by the BLM. "The additional information will contribute to the analysis and will help us make better decisions."

The BLM has been charged with creating an EIS for the Gateway West project, which is mandated by the National Environmental Policy Act.

RMP plans for the first segment of the approximately 1,150 mile long, high voltage Gateway West Transmission Line to run through Converse County from the Windstar substation (near the Dave Johnston power plant) to RMP's Aeolus substation outside of Medicine Bow. The siting of a portion of the line known as '1east' has caused widespread controversy among landowners and other citizens concerned about development in the Northern Laramie Range area and RMP has recently expressed interest in exploring new alternatives to 1e.

"We're very pleased. That gives us additional time to get input," said Diemer True, a landowner in the area and one of the founding members of the Northern Laramie Range Alliance (a group opposed to 1e and wind energy development in the Northern Laramie Range). "I think the more the public finds out, the more opposition there is."

Gov. Dave Freudenthal also praised the decision.

"By taking this decisive action, which will cost RMP quite a bit more money and the BLM significantly more staff time, they have taken a step in restoring the public's trust," Freudenthal said in another press release.

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Don Simpson
BLM State Director