

Feds delay power line study

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Mounting opposition from private landowners has prompted federal regulators to take an additional five to six months in the analysis of the Gateway West Transmission Line Project.

The proposed high-voltage transmission line would span 1,150 miles from Glenrock to Melba, Idaho.

The Bureau of Land Management announced today it needs more time to work with counties on the question of whether the power line routes should focus more on private or public lands.

"Almost uniformly, the issues with these counties are proposed routes on private land," said BLM project manager Walt George. "Looking back on it, we had held scoping meetings on it a year ago but the general public didn't really provide us with much input at that time."

Wyoming Gov. Dave Freudenthal issued a statement praising the BLM's decision.

"It seems that the BLM and Rocky Mountain Power not only listened, but really heard the concerns that were mounting with the Gateway West Project," Freudenthal said. "By taking this decisive action, which will cost Rocky Mountain Power quite a bit more money and the BLM significantly more staff time, they have taken a step in restoring the public's trust not only with this particular project, but in the overall process."

Gateway West is one among some seven major transmission line proposals aimed at tapping energy resources in the Rockies, particularly in Wyoming. Aside from concerns from private property owners, the projects must overcome significant challenges concerning wildlife and how to finance the multibillion-dollar endeavors.