

[Re-printed from the Jan.-Feb. 2008 issue of The Colestin Valley Buzz,
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West-wide Energy Corridors Routes Planned

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the Departments of Energy, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, and Defense have issued a draft plan proposing over 6,000 miles of energy corridors through public land in eleven western states – “with a width of 3,500 feet unless otherwise specified.” (3,500 feet = two-thirds of a mile wide) Thousands of acres of public and private Rogue Valley and Siskiyou Crest lands are in the draft plan’s cross-hairs.

Released in mid-November, the October 2007 “**West-wide Energy Corridor Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement**” (DPEIS) -- <http://corridoreis.anl.gov> -- proposes huge swaths of corridors through hundreds of thousands of acres of public land (including national recreation areas, monuments, wildlife refuges, and more) to “accommodate multiple pipelines (such as for oil, gas, or hydrogen), electricity transmission lines, and related infrastructure, such as access and maintenance roads, compressors, pumping stations, and other structures.” The Energy Policy Act of 2005 gives energy companies functional powers of eminent domain to push these multiple pipeline and power line corridors through thousands of miles of private land as the energy companies “connect the dots” between far-flung segments of public land.

Preliminary June 2006 maps showed a 3,500 foot wide energy corridor bisecting the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument by “expanding” existing 100 and 200 foot power line rights-of-way. Public outcry and congressional subcommittee hearing testimony by the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council has apparently caused the interagency **plan to now route the two-thirds-of-a-mile-wide pipeline/power-line corridor around the Monument**. Difficult to discern maps in the DPEIS now show “Corridor #4-247” crossing the Siskiyou Crest from Oregon into California just west of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument – and then heading east through Redding BLM’s Horseshoe Wildlife Area across Jenny Creek Falls to a Klamath River dam substation. The marks in pink highlighter show the proposed route – this is the best map provided although it lacks any substantive detail.

ACTION

☛ **February 14 is the deadline for public comment on the draft plan.**

In response to the interagency October 2007 “West-wide Energy Corridor Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement” (DPEIS), below are some comments upon and arguments in opposition to siting an energy corridor through the Siskiyou Crest and Colectin Valley area. Please use whichever of these resonate most with you or other arguments you derive. Feel free to rework the comments into your own language, as carbon copy letters will not have the same impact as letters written in all our varying voices. Keep in mind that this comment period relates only to the designation (siting) of energy corridors, so comments are best that stay on topic. Sharing concerns with elected officials and public lands managers about the merits or otherwise of the plan itself may be in order, but are a separate exercise that I comment upon in “Editor’s Letter to the Editor” [as published in the Jan.-Feb. Buzz].

A COMMENT FORM can be found online:

<http://corridoreis.anl.gov/involve/comments/index.cfm>.

You may fill it in digitally (either by composing a short message in the space provided or by attaching a Word or PDF document) or print a paper copy and then mail or fax as below.

Mail: West-wide Energy Corridor DEIS
Argonne National Laboratory
9700 S. Cass Avenue – Bldg 900, Mail Stop 4
Argonne, IL 60439

Fax: 866-542-5904

Procedural and cultural arguments:

- Object to the “pieces” on the DPEIS map, identified as “Corridor #4-247,” being called a “federal corridor” at all – since the widely separated public parcels are being used as a pretext to build on far more acres of private and state lands by condemnation. In Oregon, only 62% of the proposed corridors are on existing utility and transportation Rights of Way!
- Complain about the vague and inconsistent maps in the Draft PEIS and the lack of a local public meeting for a federal project proposing such huge impacts to our local region. Indeed, for many of us, this is the first we are hearing of a plan that could profoundly change our region.
- A corridor 2/3 mile wide, compared to the usual under 200 feet, would take up something like 1/5 of the Colectin Valley width, completely destroying its unique character and obviating many of the current private uses of the land. As a corollary to that, one disaster with the energy corridor would inescapably impact the entire Valley and all its residents.

Geographical and geological arguments:

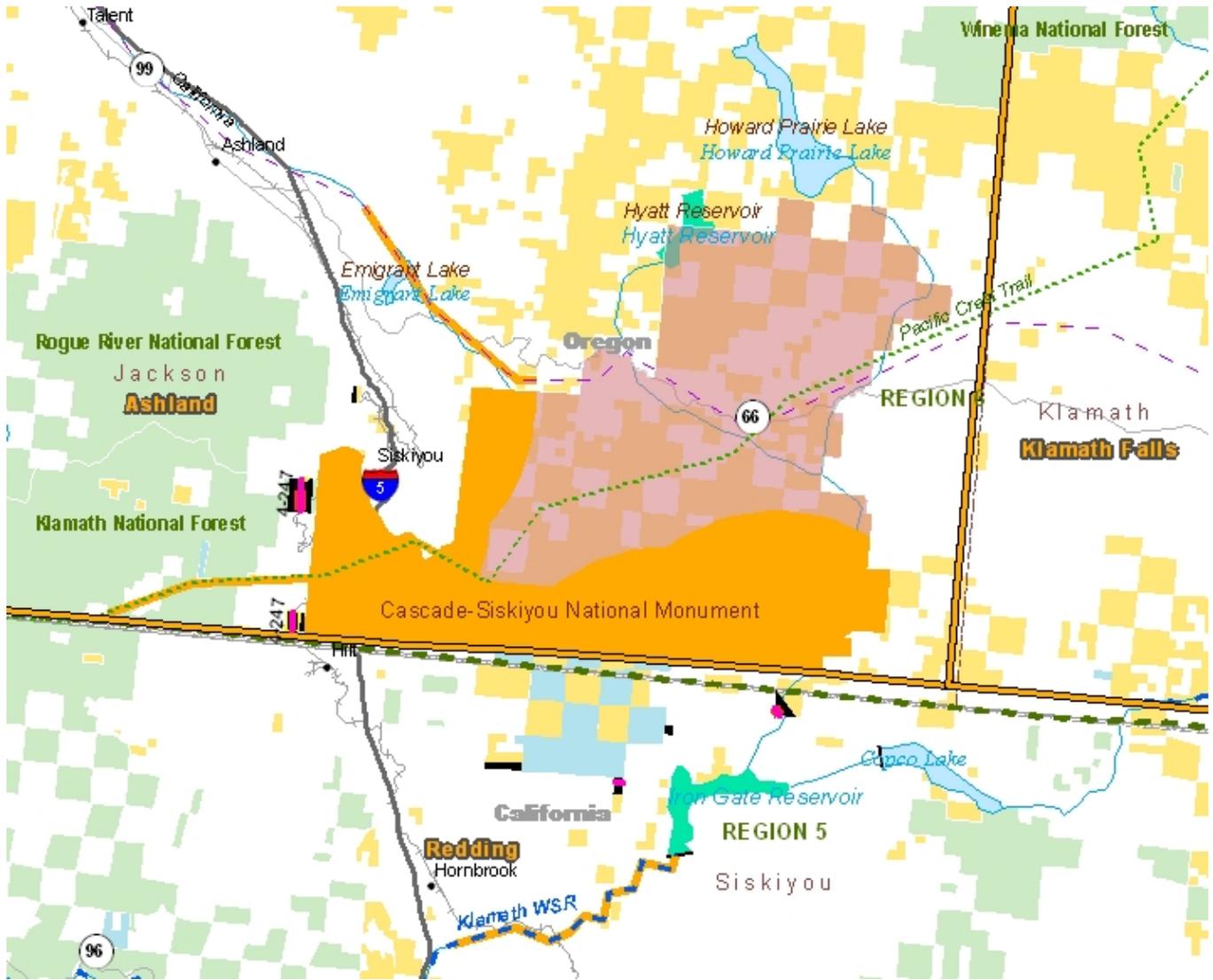
Describe that the Colestin Valley and Siskiyou Pass, and the corridor down to the Rogue Valley, amount to a geographic and geologic hazard, as well as a natural bottleneck creating the following concerns:

- The area is famously unstable, with slumps, shifts and collapses occurring frequently. The word "Siskiyou" has been described variously as having been translated from Native American language, "moving mountain," "mountain that moves" and other similar phrases. For example, as a consequence, Colestin Valley now has to employ a receiver to rebroadcast telephone signals because the cable was rendered un-usable by earth movement along its route.
- Even if aboveground, locating a corridor here presents problems, not the least of which is that it parallels Interstate 5 through a very narrow area. Interstate 5 carries vast amounts of toxic wastes, including nuclear waste, and essential supplies up and down the coast. Any sort of pipeline break, spill, or sabotage would not only disable the pipeline but also endanger Interstate 5 traffic for an indefinite period.
- Despite a vigorous volunteer effort, there simply are not enough emergency services here to handle any crisis occasioned by mega electrical corridors or oil, gas or hydrogen pipeline problems. And, because of the location, adjacent emergency services would be very unlikely to reach the site of the problem in a timely fashion, if at all, depending on how serious the accident, spill, break, toxic or vehicular disaster. Our recent blizzard is enough evidence to prove that, while we love it, our area is subject to natural forces out of our control and becomes nearly inaccessible when they occur.
- This stretch along Interstate 5 is the longest stretch of 6% grade on the interstate system. Along with the instability and bottleneck problems, the expense of siting a bunch of lines across the Siskiyou Pass would be enormous. Someone sitting in an office saw this on a map and decided it would be a good connecting point. They really needed to have some geologists and engineers tell them what's what. For that matter, just a few long-haul truckers would have set them straight. There must be hundreds of less problematic and expensive locations to route a corridor like this. Surely a steep, narrow, high mountain pass subject to extreme weather and instability cannot be a prudent nor cost-effective choice.
- A corridor that wide (2/3 mile, compared to the usual under 200 feet) would take up something like 1/5 of the Colestin Valley width, completely destroying its unique character and obviating many of the current private uses of the land. As a corollary to that, one disaster with the energy corridor would inescapably impact the entire Valley and all its residents.

Environmental arguments:

- Thank the federal agencies for moving the proposed 3,500 foot wide energy corridor route out of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument. But, make clear to them that the ecologically important Cascade-Siskiyou biological corridor of the Siskiyou Crest would *not* be enhanced by a 3,500 foot wide energy facility corridor compounding the already serious negative ecological impact of the I-5 transportation corridor. The adjacent Federal land involved is a national monument created by Presidential Proclamation to, among other things, protect objects of scientific interest and facilitate east-west migration along the only high-to-high migration corridor in the Northwest. A huge break in that corridor not only could defeat the purpose of the National Monument but also raise legal problems regarding the violation of a Presidential Proclamation. Why not seek a flatter, less ecologically sensitive route that does not transit alongside a National Monument created to protect sensitive species and routes?
- Inform the agencies that by making a Klamath River dam substation a destination for their proposed energy corridor, they are targeting a substation connected to a dam that may soon be dismantled when court-ordered priority concerns for Klamath River salmon prevent re-licensing of Klamath River dams.
- Remind them that California's state-and-federally managed Horseshoe Wildlife Area, just south of Oregon's Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, is considered by hunters and wildlife biologists to be the "best of the last" deer winter range in the region.
- Tell the agencies that the energy corridor segment proposed for California's Jenny Creek Falls is a Redding BLM Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

Thanks to Dave Willis and Nancy Ames Cole for supplying most of the information shared in the Buzz.



The encircled bits apparently represent the proposed route for Corridor #4-247. Not much to go on, especially in California, but clearly proceeding north along the west edge of the Monument right up the Colestin. It is up to us to inform the people making siting decisions that the Siskiyou Crest area may appear feasible on paper but ground-truthing will demonstrate persuasively that it is not a suitable route.



FIGURE 2.2-5 Unrestricted Conceptual West-wide Energy Transport Network Following Step 1 of the Corridor Siting Process

This map is the proposed grid for all 11 western states. Note that Corridor #4-247 doesn't even appear. It is difficult to really understand what is being planned when the public information is both vague and inconsistent.