

Notes from the Ad Hoc WGA Transmission Permitting Protocol Meeting Albuquerque, NM - April 14, 2004

On April 14, the Western Interstate Energy Board organized an ad hoc meeting of states and agencies participating under the WGA Transmission Permitting Protocol. Many of the governors' designees under the Protocol were in Albuquerque for the WGA North American Energy Summit. The following states and federal agencies were represented at the meeting: Arizona, California, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, Bureau of Land Management, Department of Energy, and White House Task Force on Project Streamlining. Alberta, which signed an addendum to join the protocol on April 15, also participated in the meeting, as did the Western Utility Group. The meeting [sign-up sheet](#) is posted on the Protocol [web page](#).

Doug Larson (WIEB) reviewed the events leading up to the western governors' request to develop a protocol for the collaborative review of proposed interstate transmission lines. He also reported on events since the signing of the Protocol by 12 governors and four federal agencies. [\[pdf\]](#) He noted that, as required by the Protocol, WIEB will be preparing a status report for Western governors on implementation of the Protocol to be delivered in June.

The following observations/recommendations were made in the ensuing discussion:

- When should the Protocol be triggered? There was broad agreement that there is value in agencies discussing an impending proposed interstate transmission line prior to an actual permit application. The value of such early interaction, however, must be weighed against the expenditure of limited agency resources. One example of early coordination in infrastructure permitting is FERC's [pre-NEPA filing procedures](#) for pipelines.
- The need for early coordination is amplified by the fact that transmission additions in different regions of the Western Interconnection can interact electrically and have interstate implications even when the projects are contained within a single state. The interaction of Path 15 in California and transmission in Idaho was given as an example.
- There is a need to reach out to the industry to explain the implementation of the Protocol.
- The California Energy Commission tracks transmission project proposals in the Western Interconnection. Efforts will be made to determine if such information can be made available to designated agencies under the Protocol.
- Three potential interstate transmission projects that could file applications in the near-term were identified.
 - Laurie Woodall (AZ) reported on the Palo Verde-Devers II 500 kv line. Southern California Edison has requested approval of the line from the California ISO. This project was evaluated in the Southwest Transmission Expansion Study. The decision as to whether and when to trigger the Protocol will be made by Governors Napolitano and Schwarzenegger.

Laurie Woodall (AZ) is seeking advice on triggering the Protocol for this project. Bill Keese (CA) will communicate the discussion to John Geesman, California's designee under the Protocol. Additional information on this project will be posted on the Protocol web site when it is received.

- Jerry Crockford (BLM) reported on the Navajo Transmission Project from Four Corners to southern Nevada. An EIS has been completed and the Western Area Power Administration signed a Record of Decision in 1997. The project, which does not appear to be contingent on new generation being built in the Four Corners area, has been delayed because of difficulty the Diné Power Authority has had in lining up investors. BLM cost recovery funds were exhausted twice, but now seem to be back on track. There are also indications that the Hualapai may now allow the line to cross their reservation. TransElect is involved in financing the project. BLM expects to issue a Record of Decision before November.
- Mark Lindberg (MT) reported on several new generation projects that may trigger new interstate transmission line proposals out of Montana. A 750 MW coal plant north of Billings is expected to begin construction this fall. The project sponsor is providing resources to the Bonneville Power Administration for transmission studies. Two 225 MW lignite-fired power plants are proposed in eastern Montana. The sponsors of this project have provided funds to Northwestern Utilities for an interconnection study. A 100 MW power plant southeast of Billings is planned. However, the plant's output is likely to be consumed within the state. A new line from Montana to the Northwest is unlikely because of opposition along the necessary right-of-way.
- Ron Montagna (BLM) reviewed the agency's procedures on processing transmission line applications. [[pdf](#)]