



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Burns District Office
28910 Hwy 20 West
Hines, Oregon 97738

IN REPLY REFER TO:

2800/OR-65891 (ORB060/ORB050) P

OCT 20 2011

Dear Interested Party:

Enclosed is the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the North Steens 230-kV Transmission Line Project. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is making the FEIS available to the public for 30 days beginning with publication of the Environmental Protection Agency's Notice of Availability in the *Federal Register* on October 21, 2011. Following the availability period, BLM and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) - Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, if applicable, will issue a Record of Decision approving the transmission line Right-of-Way (ROW) approving it with conditions or modifications, or denying it.

The BLM, as lead preparer, along with the USFWS - Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, prepared the FEIS to analyze the effects of granting, granting with conditions or denying Echanis, LLCs, a subsidiary of Columbia Energy Partners LLC (the Applicant), ROW application to construct, operate, and maintain a 230-kV transmission line, associated access roads, and other ancillary facilities across public lands managed by BLM and the USFWS. The Applicant's related proposal to develop a wind generation facility on private land in Harney County, Oregon, is dependent upon Federal approval of the ROW grant for the transmission line on public lands. Harney County has already approved a Conditional Use Permit for the private land wind generation facility.

The Project Area is located near Diamond, Oregon, roughly 55 miles southeast of Burns. The applicant's proposed transmission line (Alternative B) would extend from the proposed Echanis Wind Energy Project substation on private land near Diamond (Township 31 South, Range 34 East, Section 35) for about 29 miles west, to a new interconnection station adjacent to Harney Electric Cooperative's existing 115-kV transmission line near Diamond Junction, Oregon (Township 29 South, Range 31 East, Section 34). The Proposed transmission line would cross BLM, USFWS and private lands.

The FEIS includes analysis of the proposed transmission line route, two deviations of the proposed route, a northern route, a 115-kV construction alternative, and a "No Action" alternative. Because the wind farm development and portions of the transmission line on private lands are connected actions under the National Environmental Policy Act, the FEIS also analyzes the effects of these proposed facilities. The northern route, or Alternative C, has been identified in the FEIS as BLM's Preferred Alternative.

The Preferred Alternative transmission line route is approximately 45.95 miles long with approximately 33.66 miles crossing private lands and 12.10 miles crossing lands managed by BLM. The USFWS lands would not be affected by implementation of the Preferred Alternative. The Preferred Alternative also consists of constructing approximately 5.03 miles of new access roads and creating 25.05 miles overland access roads.

The FEIS is available online at:

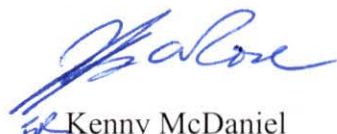
http://www.blm.gov/or/districts/burns/plans/steen_trans/index.php and is available for viewing at the following locations during regular business hours:

- Harney County Library, 80 West "D" Street, Burns, Oregon 97720
- Bend Public Library, Reference Department, 601 NW Wall Street, Bend, Oregon 97701
- Multnomah County Library, Government Documents, 801 SW 10th Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97205
- Bureau of Land Management, Burns District Office, 28910 Hwy 20 West, Hines, Oregon 97738

Additional compact disks containing the FEIS are available at the BLM Burns District Office at the address listed above. Printed copies of the document are limited in number so we ask that you utilize the methods listed above to obtain the FEIS before requesting an additional printed copy.

For further information contact the North Steens Transmission Line Project Lead, telephone (541) 573-4400; address 28910 Hwy 20 West, Hines, Oregon 97738 during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., except Federal holidays; or e-mail BLM_OR_BU_NS_Transmission_Line_EIS.

Sincerely,



Kenny McDaniel
District Manager

Enclosure